

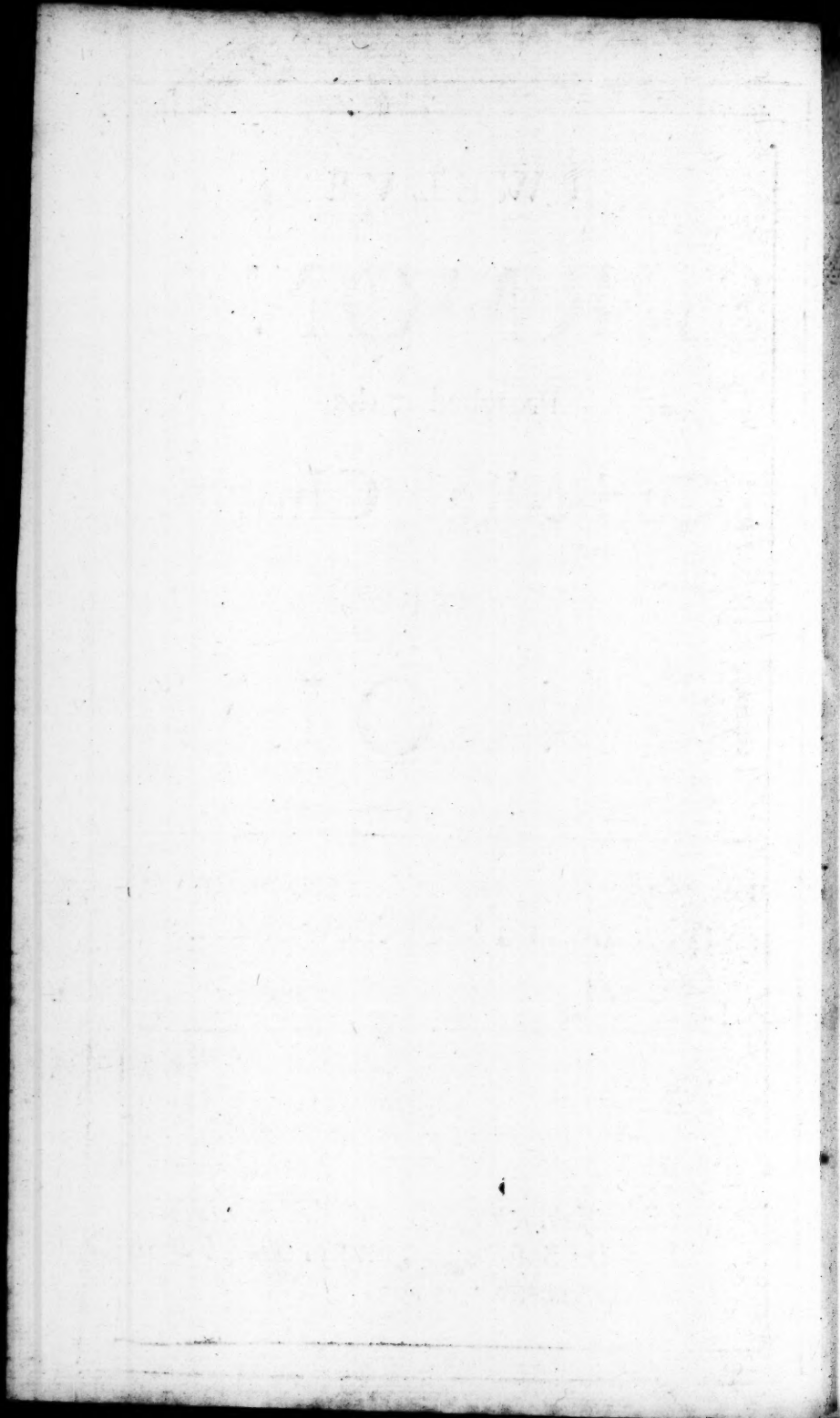
TWELVE  
SERMONS,  
Preached at the  
Cathedral Church  
OF  
LINCOLN.

By *Walter Leightonhouse*, Prebendary of  
the same, and late Fellow of *Lincoln-  
Colledge, Oxon.*

LONDON,

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*To his much Honoured, and very much  
Esteemed Uncle,*

**Mr. Samuel Heron, Merch.**

*And Secretary to the*

**Royal African Company, &c.**

*Much Honoured Sir,*

**T**HE deep Sense which  
I have of your gene-  
rous Favours, toge-  
ther with the melancholy  
Apprehension of my own  
present Incapacity, to make  
you other Returns than  
what are Verbal, have been  
greatly Instrumental to-  
wards the Publication of  
the following Sermons;  
which had not as yet seen  
the Light, but that I might  
thereby have an Opportu-  
A 2 nity

*Dedication.*

nity of publickly Avowing  
my Obligations to you,  
by affixing your excellent  
Name before them. And  
therefore, Sir, although I  
do not think them so wor-  
thy of your Notice, as to  
Cancel any part of those  
Regards, which upon sever-  
al Accounts I owe unto  
you; yet, since at this time,  
I have nothing better to of-  
fer, I humbly Request that  
you will be pleased to ac-  
cept of this Tribute of my  
Gratitude, until the good  
Providence of God shall  
think fit to place me in such  
Circumstances, as may en-  
able me to Address to you  
in

## *Dedication.*

in a more fitting Method.

'Tis very common, Sir, for Epistles Dedicatory to be swell'd with the Encomiums of those to whom they are Address; but that Relation by which I stand so nearly Ally'd to you, Prohibits me from Attempting to Decypher that unparalell'd Character, with which you are justly adorned; and if it did not, your conspicuous Worth, for which you are so highly esteem'd by all good Men, would tell me that such an Undertaking were not only needless, but that the loftiest Expressions could not suffice.

*Dedication.*

ficiently speak your Merits.

And therefore, I shall add no more, but my earnest Petitions to the Throne of Grace; that the same All-wise and Omnipotent King of Heaven, who hath, by a more than ordinary Providence, Supported and Conducted you through the wheeling Vicissitudes of a long Life, will be pleas'd to go on still to be Gracious to you, and be your Comfort, and exceeding great Reward; which shall be the constant Prayer of,

*Honoured Sir,  
Your most Obliged Servant,  
and most Obedient Nephew.*

Washingburgh,  
April 14. 1697.

Walter Leightonhouse.

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Ninth



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The Author's remoteness from the Press has occasion'd several Errata's in the Printing, which the Reader is desir'd to correct as follows.

**P**Age 1. line 9. read *see. 3. 23. make his. 19. 1. del. der to. 19. 8. in sense. ally'd. 30. 3. apposite. 38. 13. if it. 40. 1. or. 9. scrutiny. but of. 47. 10. us a. 50. 17. expects. 55. 6. del. you. 19. del. own. 58. 19. to do. 64. 6. del. in. 93. 16. fight. 95. 22. party. 96. 12. and his. 104. 3. and. 106. 4. had. 14. couches. 20. his thy. 113. 1. in to. 9. del. not. 117. 19. the. 121. 11. del. the. 122. 10. unaccountable. 123. 8. over thine. 124. 10. is it. 18. of. 128. 9. ever any. 133. 11. seasons. 20. del. waxes. 135. 18. del. a. 141. 6. representation. 146. 11. **לסטה חטא** 153. 20. add and. 159. 10. to imagine that 182. 10. del. his. 186. 13. sins. 187. 9. even in. 202. 12. fort. 204. 13. Murrion. 213. 9. del. them. 232. 20. Talmudists. 248. 14. are we. 253. 18. perusing. 260. 13. superstru'd. 261. 2. and he. 15. our. 272. 13. thy on. 302. 23. **א וי** 306. 9. Vitellius. 13. Galba. 15. Palaeologi. 16. unusual. 312. 24. Man. 318. 6. on. 319. 2. such. 334. 4. dim light. 336. 20. Upharfin. 337. 7. blot out much. 339. 22. proceeding. 355. 14. ingenuous. 363. 17. lucid intervals. 391. 9. blot out kind. be by. 394. 2. in. 420. 10. in 435. 3. blot out the. 440. 14. add one. 443. 20. clouds. 447. 20. may. 463. 9. his. 12. blot out up.*

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 ISAIAH XLV. VII.

*I form the light, and create darkness;  
I make peace, and create evil: I  
the Lord do all these things.*

**T**Here is nothing which doth more affect Mankind with Surprise and Wonder, than the sudden and unaccountable vicissitude of sublunary Beings: To see the lofty towering Thoughts of the mighty Cedars give place to the contemptible Being of an humble Shrub, and that Shrub again on a sudden debas'd to its Primitive lowness; to see *Light* and *Darkness*, *Peace* and *Evil* reciprocally clash and jostle out one another, does equally strike us with a panick Fear and a silent Wonder.

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And

And 'twas such uncouth Transactions as these, perhaps, which either caused *Protagoras* to deny the Being of a God, or *Democritus* and *Epicurus* to oppose his Providential management of things: That made *Averroes* fancy that the Almighty could not see, or some of his more blind Adherents assert, that he sees indeed, but yet acted as an idle Spectator of worldly business.

But these Opinions, as plausible as they might appear to be, were yet only the base Issue of degenerate Minds, and the product of a dark ignorance. For as my Lord Bacon very well observes, that *no true Philosophers, but some dabblers in the Arts and Sciences were ever either Atheistical or Profane*; so may we truly say, that no Man, whose sense will give him leave to search into the *νεγρολας τὴν μυστὴν* into the Mysteries of Providence, can do less than shoot himself

self beyond the veil of casual accidents, but must resolve the several changes here below into the wise management of God himself; who superintends all our actions, and by a secret and unalterable mode of Government, regulates and disposes of the whole Scene of humane Affairs.

No Man that is not absolutely possess'd with insensibility, but must acknowledge with the Stoicks, *ἐπι παντα ἵνα ἀέσσης ἦς*; That all things are here transacted by the appointment of the best Mind; and that although there may be a dark Ataxy, a strange disorder permitted by this Alwise Being, yet he still presides over the World, and will in due time give a *Specimen* to the doubting Sons of Men that he does see; *Will make bare his arm in the sight of all the nations, Isaiah 52. 10. And make righteousness as resplendent as the light, and his judgments as the*

noon-day, Psalm 37. 6. Will give an ample testimony to all Mankind, that, *He is the Lord, and there is none else, that there is no God besides him, but that 'tis he that forms the light and creates darkness, that makes peace and creates evil, that he the Lord doth all these things.*

For the right understanding of which words, we need only consider, that by *Light* and *Darkness*, *Peace* and *Evil*, is here meant all, that prosperous or adverse fortune which does at any time befall a Church or a Kingdom. For in the beginning of this *Chapter* we have God promising to manifest his Providence by delivering his People *Israel* out of Captivity, and destroying the *Babylonians*, in order to which he raises up, directs and prospers *Cyrus* as an happy Instrument to effect all this, as you may see, v. 1, 2, 3. and because this was  
fore-

foretold by our Prophet Two Hundred Years before its accomplishment, therefore to strengthen their Faith, and confirm their Hope, and to support them with the comfortable expectation, that God would in due time *deliver them out of the hands of their Enemies*, he is pleased by his Holy Prophet to signify to them, that *he is the Lord and there is none else, there is no God besides him, none who can give deliverance to Jacob, or bring redemption unto Israel; That 'tis he alone that forms the Light, and creates Darkneß, that makes Peace and creates Evil, that he the Lord does all these things.* Which being premis'd the sense or meaning of the Text seems to be briefly this.

That God is the Supreme Governour and Lord of the whole Earth, does exalt and debase, does make happy or unsuccessful every Church, State, or Kingdom that is



made so: The Issues of Prosperity or adverse Fortune are *graven upon the palms of his Hands*, Isaiah 49. 16. And he does aggrandize or debase whom or after what manner he in his Alwise Providence thinks fit.

'Tis by him that the bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girt with strength. 1 Sam. 2. 4. 'Tis his fatherly munificence that makes his Church to flourish like a palm tree, and 'tis the withdrawing the light of his countenance that dries it up and makes it wither: 'Tis the influence of his gracious Presence that *exalteth a Nation*, making it healthful and strong, and 'tis the Breath of his Displeasure that makes it afraid, weak, and pusillanimous; in a word, 'Tis the hand of the Lord only that is mighty, and 'tis the God of Jacob alone that ruleth unto the ends of the Earth.

This

*First Sermon.*

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This is briefly the meaning of these words: In discoursing of which, I shall take leave to insist upon these two particulars, viz.

First, That there is neither good nor evil, which happens to Mankind, but what comes by the directive Hand of Providence.

Secondly, I shall shew you, what are the reasons, why God suffers the State or Condition of his Servants or his People to be eclips'd.

First, That there is neither good nor evil which happens to Mankind, but what comes by the directive Hand of Providence.

'Twas the Opinion of *Democritus*, *Empedocles*, *Leucippus* and others, that all things here below were link'd with the chain of inevitable Fate, whose decrees as it was impossible to frustrate, so were it in vain and foolish to resist. But we who, blessed be God, are brought up un-

der the Dispensation of Christianity are taught better things. That every thing is governed not by wild chance or *fatal necessity*, but by the wisdom and guidance of that great *Architect*, who *form'd the World and all that therein is*. By whose Pencil alone all the Schemes of Action are delineated, and without whose operative or permissive Power nothing is done that is done.

'Tis true indeed, the Ways of Divine Providence are so inscrutable, that Men are oft-times gravelled in their apprehensions, and are not in the least able to fathom the depth of his Proceedings. But yet, be we never so short-sighted, God acts according to the rules of just proportion, and regulates all his Proceedings by *weight and measure*. He does nothing, but what is approvable by the greatest Wisdom, and nothing is done but what is effected

cted by his Omnipotent Power. Our Blessed Saviour, tells us, that not a sparrow falls to the ground without the knowledge and direction of our Heavenly Father, nay, that even the hairs of our head are all numbred, Matth. 10. 29. Signifying to us, that the Alwise God presides over the Sons of Men, and by his Divine Care governs and manageth the most minute particulars of them. That all events, though seemingly casual and fortuitous, are directed by his Hand, and that there is no such thing as contingency and chance through the whole World, and that in matters of greatest uncertainty there is a pre-ordained course of effects. That *Bow*, which was drawn by a certain Man at a venture, had its Arrow directed by God to smite the King of Israel between the joints of the harness, 1 Kings 22. 34. And if a Person be accidentally slain by another

ther, God tells us himself, that 'tis  
*he that delivers him into his hand,*  
Exod. 21. 13. The invidious Bre-  
thren of Joseph conspir'd against him  
to slay him, they cast him into a pit,  
they sell him to the Ishmaelites; and  
yet after this long train of Causes,  
he resolves all into the Wise Provi-  
dence of God, Gen. 45. 7, 8. *And*  
*God sent me before you to preserve you*  
*a posterity in the earth; so now it was*  
*not you that sent me hither, but God.*

Thus again, when for their Ini-  
quity and Backsliding, the Children  
of Israel were carried away captive of  
Nebuchadrezzar King of Babylon, al-  
though his boundless Pride and wan-  
ton Ambition might appear upon  
first sight to be the occasion of the  
poor Captives misery, yet, if we  
attend to the voice of God, we  
shall find the point clear'd, and  
apparently see, that it was not the  
King of the Chaldeans, but the Lord  
of

of the whole earth, who was the cause of their Captivity, *Jer. 24. 5.* I will acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans. And if we have recourse to the other end of the perspective, we may observe, that there is no prosperous gale of Fortune, no lucky hit of Affairs that ever happen'd to the People of God, but his Hand was immediately concern'd in it; and for the proof of this, we need go no further than this single instance in my Text. *Cyrus* as the *Jewish Writers* observe was an ambitious aspiring Prince, his Ambition moves him to make War against the *Assyrians* for the enlargement of his Dominions; now though his Pride push'd him forward with an unlimited earnestness to the accomplishment of all this, yet should he in the heighth of his career



career have been told, that this would certainly bring deliverance to *Israel*, and build the Temple of *Jerusalem*; he would not have believed that such consequences should have follow'd upon his Enterprize; yet we find this the design of Providence, *that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet Esaias v. 4. For Jacob my servants sake and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee [Cyrus] by thy name, I have surnamed thee though thou hast not known me.* But 'tis so acknowledged a truth by all who call themselves Christians, *That there is no good or evil which happens, but comes by the directive hand of Providence,* that I shall travel no further in the confirmation of it. But shall proceed to the next consideration, *viz.* to shew you

Secondly, What may be the reasons why God suffers the state or  
con-

condition of his Servants, or his People to be eclips'd.

And this he does,

First, To try their patience and constancy.

There are a sort of *Lukewarm Christians*, who whilst the Sun-shine of God's favour is upon them, seem very zealous for the support of that Religion which they profess, and whilst the *loaves are to be had*, can be content to follow Christ and approach his Sanctuary; but if sorrow and tribulation, if trials and afflictions come upon them, if the Waters begin to rage and swell, and Persecution threaten to enter into the Church and to seize the Professors of the true Religion, these, not having deep root in themselves fall away; and presently (like the *Traditors* in the Primitive times) are ready to give up their Bibles rather than their Bodies to be burnt; they like Religion *best cheap*, but if they

they must lay down their Lives for it, they think it too dear a purchase and not worth the owning.

Now there is no way to distinguish between these pretending Christians, and the real Disciples of Jesus, but to bring them under the *Rod of Affliction*, or to *purge them* with some severe fiery trial ; then the *straw and stubble* will be discern'd from the *gold and precious stones*, and the *dross* be separated as in a *refiners vessel*. Nay, so greatly deceitful is the Heart of Man, that 'tis difficult for a Man's own self to know, whether he be not in the number of those, who upon such severe onsets would go away sorrowful. For though we may seem well grounded in the Principles of our Religion, and the Articles of our Faith, yet so soft and effeminate are we, and so apt is Nature to reluct and give back, when assailed by Violence  
and

and Oppression (especially when Life it self comes in competition) that there must be very strong resolutions, and a great deal of Christian Fortitude to make us stand the shock of adverse Fortune, and *resist unto Blood.*

And therefore 'tis greatly proper, that God should sometimes bring us into straits that we may know our selves; and that others may discern betwixt *the Man* and the *Christian*, and give a Testimony to the World that God has a chosen People, who value his Glory more than the preservation of their Lives, or the support of their Liberties; and this is that which *Moses* advertiseth the *Children of Israel*, Deut. 8. 2. *Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee those forty years in the wilderness, to humble and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart,*

heart, whether thou wouldst keep his Commandments or no.

Secondly, Another reason why God often suffers his own People to be greatly afflicted is to make his own Glory to appear in their uprightness and sincerity.

Had not God Almighty suffered the *patience of Job* to have been deeply exercised, the Devil would have taken his position for granted, That *Job* did not serve God for nought, but when he found that notwithstanding all the severe assaults which he made upon him, the upright man still held his integrity, this doubtless made him conclude, that there was more sweetness in Religion and a good Conscience than he thought of; this convinc'd him, that the service of God was perfect freedom, and that all good things of this life could not counterbalance the hopes of a Better. Thus again  
had

had the *Children of Israel* liv'd in a continued round of uninterrupted Joy and Felicity, had they appeared before *Pharaoh* in grandure and triumph, and through the whole tenure of their Lives outvyed the splendor of his Court, or the multitude of his Host, he would either have thought on one hand, that all things were govern'd by the *settled Laws of Fate or Nature*, or on the other hand have concluded, that they had very great reason to *serve the God of their Fathers*; and that 'twas their Interest, and not the reasonableness of their Religion, that caus'd them to *worship the Lord of the whole Earth*. But to see them forlorn and naked under the Saw of Oppression and the Yoke of *Egypt*, to see them seemingly desolate and forsaken of God, and clad with the sable covering of Slavery and Disgrace; and yet notwithstanding all

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these



these things to find them Zealous Worshippers of the God of *Israel*; and each of them as it were constantly breathing out that Sacred Hymn of Submission: *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.* This could not but make this *Ægyptian* Taskmaster believe that they receiv'd some extraordinary Supports from the *Father of Spirits*, and convince him, that of a Truth God was with them, and amongst them. It could do no less then tend greatly to the Glory of God and his pure Religion, to see the Professors of it hug their Principles amidst the Fetters of Slavery, and keep their Consciences free whilst their Bodies were confin'd. But then,

*Thirdly*, God sometimes suffers his own People to be Eclips'd because of their Sins.

Man is by Nature so prone to sin, that he hath need of all the Mounds and Fences imaginable to secure him

him in, order to reduce him to his Duty. And therefore God has laid before him the Sanctions of reward, to allure and win him to himself, and has endeavoured to attract him to Duty with the pleasing Sun-beams of his Favour. But yet so deeply immerst are we incens'd, and so near are we allay'd to this dirty Planet, which we tread on, that we are ever and anon led away by a false Bias, *and set our Affections on things that are seen instead of those things which are permanent and sure.* And therefore when we are *settled upon our Lees,* God causeth us to *pass under the Rod,* to *make us remember our ways,* and *loath our selves in our own sight.* He brings us *through the fire,* that he may *refine us as silver,* and *purifie us as gold.* He takes no delight in the Miseries of his Creatures, but yet he has so severe a regard for our better part, that he had much rather make us smart here than suffer us to be tormented hereafter. And

therefore since we are assur'd that the Love of God to Mankind is always tender and compassionate, if we at any time see the Professors of the True Religion brought into great straits, or labouring under the visiting Hand of God; if we see them grappling with any rough Entertainment, or almost ready to sink thro' any vexing Cares, or pinching Sorrows, we may safely and pertinently ask that Question which was put by the Prophet concerning the chastisement of the Almighty. *Isaiab,* 27. 7, 8, 9. *Hath he smitten him? &c. By this therefore shall the Iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin.*

Thus having very briefly discuss'd the two Heads which I purpos'd to speak to, namely, First, That there is neither Good, nor Evil which happens to Mankind, but what comes by the directive Hand of Providence.

*Secondly,*

*Secondly*, What are the Reasons, why God suffers the State or Condition of his Servants or his People to be Eclips'd? I shall now to improve what has been said to your advantage, draw some few Practical Observations and so conclude.

First then, Is there neither Good nor Evil, but what comes by the directive Hand of God. Then let us apply to him for his Blessings whether Private or Publick.

'Tis not within the reach of our Eye to foresee, much less within the compass of our Power, to prevent those dangers which too frequently threaten our Ruine, and as little is it in our breast to obtain by our own proper strength those Blessings which we wish for, or to grasp those Enjoyments which our Souls so eagerly thirst after. And therefore since we cannot but be sensible of our own weakness and insufficiency, how high-

ly doth it concern us to apply our selves to him *from whom every good and every perfect gift cometh.* Dost thou therefore labour under any private Affliction, or groan under the pressure of any Calamity? Art thou cramped in thy Fortunes or Estate, or doth the lankness of thy condition make thee contemptible? Fly to God for succor, who is a *sure Refuge in time of Trouble, and a very present help in all our Needs.* 'Tis he that pulleth down one and setteth up another; that bringeth the Beggar out of the Dust, and the Poor out of the Dunghill, to set him amongst Princes, even the Princes of the Earth. Again, is thy Soul bowed within thee, and thy Spirit within thee grown desolate thorow the grievousness of thy Sin? *Are thine Iniquities gone over thine Head, and like an heavy burthen prove too heavy for thee to bear?* Apply thy self to God, who is the *only Rock of*  
salva-

salvation, and the staff of comfort ;  
 shelter thy self under the Wing, on  
 his Mercy, for 'tis he that kills, and  
 'tis he alone that can make alive ;  
 he who Wounded, and can alone heal :  
 'Tis the balm of Gilead which can  
 alone heal thy putrified sores, and the  
 blood of Jesus Christ only which can  
 cleanse thee from all sin.

Do the Clouds gather thick about  
 us, and portend Ruine and Destru-  
 ction to the Church or State. Let us  
 apply to God by earnest Supplica-  
 tion and Prayer, and by that means  
 interest his good Providence on our  
 side ; let us remember that the Sup-  
 plications of Moses were more pow-  
 erful than the Arms of Joshua, and  
 the Prayers of Hezekiah, than the  
 Army of Assyria ; let us not fail to  
 apply our selves strongly to the  
 Throne of Grace, always considering  
 that 'tis God alone that stoppeth the  
 raging of the sea, and the tumult of its  
 waves,



waves, and the madness of the people; that 'tis by his Hand alone that we can be supported, and his Truth alone can be our *Shield and Buckler*. 'Tis not the Arm of Flesh or humane Wit or Policy, that can make our Church flourish, or our Religion be Establish'd. 'Tis not *Acbitophel's* Wisdom or *Goliath's* Strength, not the *Philistines* Sword, nor the subtilty of the Uncircumcised that can support the *Tents of Kedar*, or make joyful the dwellings of *Jacob*, but 'tis God alone that can bring strength to *Israel* and make the gates of *Zion* to rejoyce. 'Tis not the vastness of our Armies, or the strength of our Fleets, that can either guard our Persons, or defend our Faith. For God reigneth in *Jacob*, and if his anger be never so little kindled against us, if he be in the least provoked to jealousy by our Transgressions, in vain are all our most costly Preparations, in  
vain

vain our Fortresses of Defence or the Shield of Battle, in *vain is the help of man*. Which leads me to a second consideration, that we may collect from the Premises, *viz.*

That if there be neither Good nor Evil but what comes from the Hand of God, then it nearly concerns us upon any *Visitation* of his to search diligently into the cause of it.

God is too gracious to punish us without cause, and therefore if we lie under his visiting hand, we have doubtless some dross and corruption to be purged out, some putrified Sore or noisome Wound that wants searching. Art thou therefore afflicted in thy particular Concerns in thy Person, thy Estate, or thy Family? Enquire whether there be not some Personal Crime or homebred Sin *lying at thy Door*. Dive into the Secrets of thine own Heart, and enquire whether all be well, whether thy Heart be sound  
before

before God or not. Search diligently whether like good old *Eli*, thou hast not some *Wicked Sons within thy Tents*, or whether 'tis not thine own Sin, which like that of *Cain's*, dogs and pursues thee.

Do the times seem big with storm and tempest? Do they threaten ruin and subversion to Church or State? Let us inquire by what National sin it is that we have charg'd those Clouds with Thunder, and what publick Iniquity has *sharpen'd the arrows of the Almighty*, and made them fly abroad; whether by swearing or lying, or killing, or stealing, or committing adultery, or causing blood to touch blood, i. e. by the frequent repetition or a complication of our sins, we have not made the Nation to mourn, and the pleasant places thereof to be dried up, *Hos. 4. 2. 3.* For this indeed is the gracious intention of Providence in all his unwelcome Dispensations  
to-

towards us, that we should thereby be moved to search and dive into the secret causes of our misery, be brought to a sence of our sins, and suffer nothing vile or unclean to dwell amongst us ; *but to cleanse our hands and purifie our hearts, and put away from us the accursed thing which is in the midst of us.* To let his rod put us upon trying our ways, and be an occasion of our turning every man from the evil of his doings ; and therefore let us not be so foolish as to defeat those blessed designs of our Maker, but *when his chastening is upon us, let us pour out our prayers before him, and humble our selves in his sight ;* and let us not provoke him to bring that bitter invective against us, which he brought against *Abaz,* why should you be smitten any more, ye will sin more and more ? i.e. Ye will bring a greater punishment upon your selves, by not making a right use

use of the lesser ; by not answering the ends of my fatherly correction ye will provoke me to pour upon you the *vials of my indignation*.

Thirdly, Does God create Light and make Peace ? then let us trust and confide in him for his Mercies, and expect and hope deliverance from him.

He that seriously considers the many and great Deliverances which God vouchsafed to his People of old, the signal Mercies which he bestowed upon particular Persons, and more extraordinary protections and deliverances which he shew'd to his Church and our Fore-fathers in times past, cannot suffer his Spirit to sink under any forlorn despondency. For what if the *waters of Marah* be very deep, and the billows of Sorrow threaten our total overthrow ? What tho' the surges of Affliction rise high, and the Church it self shou'd seem just

a sinking? God's hand is not shorten'd that he cannot redeem, nor his arm weaken'd that he has not power to deliver. *Behold at his rebuke he drys up the sea, he makes the rivers a wilderness,* as he speaks of his own Church, *Is. 50. 2.* and draws this comfortable conclusion from it, at the 10 v. *who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, let him stay upon his God.* Intimating unto us, that tho' sometimes there may appear to be a dereliction of his People, yet 'tis not for want of power in him to give them a speedy deliverance, but for some great and wise ends that he suffers them to be for some time visited with the *Rod of his anger*, and that he can, whenever he pleaseth, *bring his people out of captivity, and redeem the out-casts of Israel;* and that  
he



he hath given signal Instances of his having frequently done so. And 'tis a worthy remark, and very opposite to our purpose which we may every one of us draw from *Abimelech's* answer to that question of *David*, *is there not here under thine head spear or sword, for I have neither my sword nor my weapons with me; and the Priest said the sword of Goliath the Philistine whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold it is here; if thou wilt take that, take it? and David said there is none like that give it me, 1 Sam. 21. 8, 9.* Upon which, I say, we may make this worthy remark: That *David* did not approve of that Sword more than another, either upon the account of the matter or the form of it; but because it had an extraordinary Mercy writ upon it; as if he had said, *that that very Sword will not only defend me against mine Enemies, but strengthen my Faith*  
and

and Affiance in God, by re-minding me of God's former deliverance. That Sword denotes to me the great mercy of God towards me, in protecting of me from the insulting rage of that *uncircumcised Philistine*; and therefore every step I tread will read a Lecture to me of firm dependance upon God's future favours. And indeed, would we but every one of us make the same remarks upon the several footsteps of God's Mercy to us, we could not chuse but believe, that God would still go on to be *gracious*, and signalize his Mercy in our protection; and the only means to prevent his doing so, is to forget his past favours, and to distrust his future. But then

*Fourthly*, Doth God at any time defer our deliverance, and suffer us to languish in a long expectation of comfort? Does he almost seem to have *forgotten to be gracious*, and to  
have

have shut up his loving kindness in displeasure; let us remember the works of the Lord, let us remember his wonders of old; but particularly let us call to mind the instance in my Text, that Cyrus was nam'd, and deliverance to *Israel* promised many years before its accomplishment, and the poor Captives languish'd out a long series of sorrow before the mournful Curtain was withdrawn. And yet *He being faithful that had promised*, did at the appointed time put a period to their Sufferings; and therefore if at any time we be clad with the robes of misery, let us not faint tho' the hand of God should not bring speedy deliverance to us, but be fully assur'd, that we shall reap in due time and in God's proper season receive an happy issue out of all our afflictions; and therefore let us with a quiet succumbency of mind submit, and be content and wait the leisure of the Almighty. Lastly,

*Lastly, Hath God at any time heard our humble Petitions and brought salvation to us, hath he blessed us with good things, and made us glad with the light of his countenance; let us not be unmindful of his Mercies, but magnifie his glory and his name above all things; let us consider, that 'tis he that is the God of prosperous Events, and that from his Hand alone it is that we receive all our good things: And let us daily set our selves to shew forth his praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up our selves to his service, and by walking before him in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life.*

There is nothing that more highly engages God to go on to be gracious to us, than our thankfulness for past Mercies, for this is an owning our dependance upon him, and an acknowledging that he is our God, and that there is none else, that

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there

*there is none other besides him that can do as he doth. And this has been the constant Measures of those Holy Men of old, in whose cause God so frequently manifested his Power, and made his glory to appear. For thus Jacob when he had been delivered from the Hand of Esau, calls upon his whole Houshold to joyn with him in this great Duty. Let us arise and go into Bethel, and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress. Gen. 35. 23. And we find Moses and Israel solemnly celebrating God's Praise in a Song for their Deliverance at the Red Sea. Exod. 15. 2, 3. Thus likewise when Israel got the Victory over the Amalekites; Moses built an Altar and called it Jehovah nissi i. e. The Lord my banner. Exod. 17. 15. And Joshua pitched stones in Gilgal, in memory of Israels passing dry through Jordan, that all the people*

people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord that it is mighty; as we read, *Josh. 4. 20, 21.* Thus you see that it hath ever been accounted a reasonable Sacrifice, either for private or publick Mercies, to sing praises unto God, and to magnifie his holy name. And 'tis a mark of reproach set upon that, otherwise good King *Hezekiah*, that after God had answer'd his Prayers and deliver'd him from a dangerous fit of Sicknefs, *he rendred not again according to the benefit done unto him. 2 Chr. 32. 24, 25.* And now should we weigh our selves in this ballance, alas! how many of us would be found light and lacking? For how many Mercies do we receive without ever looking to the Hand that gave them? How many publick as well as private Deliverances have we had, without ever saying so much as *the Lord be praised?* As if we on



purpose intended to write a general Oblivion upon all the Favours of God, and were resolved to bury his loving kindness in a dark forgetfulness. But this, my Brethren, is not the way to engage God to be on our side; but if we intend that he shall still *speake peace to us, and bless us* either with publick or private Blessings; we must *render unto him the calves of our lips* for those good things which his Hand hath already dispens'd unto us; we must *praise the Lord according to his righteousness, and sing to the name of the Lord most high; we must praise him with our whole hearts, and shew forth all his marvellous works. We must sing unto the Lord because he hath dealt bountifully with us, and speak of his righteousness and his praise all the day.* As we hope therefore and wish for his Mercies; let us not fail to pay him this easie Homage, the tribute  
of

of our Lips ; but let us sing unto the Lord, let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation ; let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise, be thankful unto him and speak good of his name ; in a word, let us all of us with one heart and one voice sing the song of Moses ; saying, great and marvellous are thy works Lord God Almighty ! Who shall not fear thee , O Lord, and glorifie thy name, for thou only art holy ; thou only art the Lord and there is none else ; thou formest the light and createst darkness ; thou makest peace and createst evil ; thou the Lord dost all these things. To thee therefore O blessed God, and thy Son Jesus Christ, together with the Holy Ghost the Comforter, Three Persons and one God, be ascribed as is most due, all Glory and Honor, Majesty and Dominion, now and for evermore. *Amen and Amen.*

## P S A L M LXXXVI. XI.

*Teach me thy way, O Lord, I will walk  
in thy truth.*

**A**Mongst all the Blessings which God Almighty hath so freely bestowed upon all Mankind, there is none which can stand in competition with Knowledge and Understanding. This being that which distinguisheth us from the lower class of ordinary Creatures, and placeth us above the common herd of brute *beasts that perish.*

But then tho' our reasoning faculty be qualified with so great an excellency as this; yet if be not appropriated to a right end, but only serve to minister to our Lusts and Vanity, and we still suffer the  
Beast

Beast to ride the Man ; we shall be no farther advantag'd by being rational Creatures, then that we shall thereby be made capable of everlasting damnation.

Knowledge indeed is the most desirable Tree in this earthly Paradise, but yet the Fruit thereof if not accompanied with the fear of God, is but like the *apples of Sodom* fair and beautiful, but in their effects full of Stench and Corruption. So that had we the Wisdom of the *Ægyptian* Magi or the *Delphick* Prophets, had we the knowledge of the *Græcian* Thales, or the Subtilty of *Palimedes*, had we as great skill in Politicks as *Solon* or *Lycurgus* ; could we like the Learned *Stagyrite*, lay open all the Secrets of Nature ; or like his greater Master, furnish all Ages with choice Principles of Moral Learning ; understood we thoroughly all the Theorems of

each Art of Science; nay could we call the Stars themselves after their own Names, yet were we at the same time ignorant of Divine Truth's, and the Cabala and Mysteries of Religion, *in our much knowledge we should find much sorrow,* and the effects of our best scruting would be but a Mushroom continuance; we should quit our being with dissatisfaction and uneasiness, and go down to the Grave with pensive Thoughts and melancholy Abodings. And for this reason when that great Son of David was put to his Option, to ask whatever he would and it should be given him, tho' after the grant of his wish he could give a perfect account of all the Curiosities and Secrets of Nature from the tallest Cedar to the Hyssop upon the Wall; yet he had more sublime intentions in *asking of Wisdom* than that of unravel-

vel.

velling the frame and structure of  
sublunary Beings, and levelled his  
thoughts upon a greater good than  
this World could afford. He who  
for his Zeal in *building an house for  
the holy one of Israel* had this Favour  
propo'd to him, had an eye to the  
Service which was to be perform'd  
in that place, and therefore thought  
fit to ask *an understanding heart*,  
that the Sacrifice and the Offer-  
ing might both of them be *without  
blemish*, and become a proper Ho-  
locauft to the God of Wisdom.  
And doubtless the Son had in a  
great measure imbib'd these Prin-  
ciples from that Kingly Prophet his  
Holy Father, who although he was  
*a man after God's own heart*, and had  
no sooner at any time confess'd his  
Sin or implor'd a Blessing from God,  
but the *iniquity of the former was  
forgiven*, and the issue of the latter  
was, that he *had his desire fulfill'd*  
and



and was not denied the request of his lips, who had he ask'd might have had the gold of Arabia, or the riches of Saba; yet the substance of all his Princely Hymns and passionate Supplications center in my Text. *Teach me thy way, O Lord, I will walk in thy truth.*

*Way and Truth* in this place are Synonymous Expressions, and do both signifie the Faithful Statutes and Commandments of God; so that in these words are implied the earnest Petition of a Person resolutely bent to do the Will of God; a Person that finds his Will more inclin'd than his Understanding prepar'd, and is abundantly more ready to serve his Maker than his Prudence can dictate the method of his doing so; and therefore least his Zeal should be without Knowledge, and his forwardness to serve God should betray him into some precipitate Error;

Error; he first desires that the Almighty would be pleas'd to teach him his way upon the full assurance, that he will no sooner understand it than he will put it in practice. *Teach me thy way, O Lord, I will walk in thy truth.*

So that there are contained in the Text. First, *David's Request*, Secondly, his Resolution upon it. In treating of which I shall endeavour to shew you.

*First*, That no Man can come to the saving Knowledge of God's Truth without he be pleas'd to Teach and Instruct him, and therefore,

*Secondly*, If we intend to be instructed and taught by him, 'tis necessary that in imitation of the Holy *Psalmist* we pray unto him for that great Blessing, but then,

*Thirdly*, If upon our Petitions God would be pleas'd to teach us  
his

his way, we are strictly oblig'd to walk in his Truth.

First, No Man can come to the saving Knowledge of God's Truth without he be pleas'd to teach and instruct him.

That great Doctor of the *Gentiles*, who was brought up at the feet of the Learned *Gamaliel*; whose Education was more generous, and who could speak more Tongues than all the rest of the Apostles, was so defective in his Spiritual Understanding, that he could not by searching find out God, he could not find out the Almighty to perfection. Notwithstanding all his Rabbinical Knowledge, and those great Acquests which he had made by his long Acquaintance with the *Sophoi* and the *Sanhedrim*, he continued in the gall of bitterness till the peculiar influence of the Blessed Spirit of God had made him a Profelite

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to Jesus ; and notwithstanding all his skill in Letters, or the acuteness of his Wit and Parts ; he would have carried on his Zealous Persecution had not the Holy Ghost been his immediate Tutor. And indeed the same blindness doth still accompany all Mankind ; we are all of us by nature wrapt in the shades of Ignorance, and in the darkness and folly of unthinking Men, and are no more *able to direct our own steps than we are to form the light or create darkness.* For the natural man cannot know the things of the spirit.

We may indeed be convinc'd that *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners* ; we may thoroughly know all the Precepts of the Gospel, and have them writ at our Fingers ends ; we may be able to discourse notably and to vindicate all the Controverted Points of God's revelation.

vealed Will, and yet notwithstanding all this be as far from the Kingdom of Heaven as the dark *Jew* or unconverted *Gentile*; nay farther, we may have skill enough to trace the Scriptures from their Original Languages, and may spend time in searching into all the Criticisms of the Bible, and not only read Commentaries, but be our selves capable of glossing upon the Text; and yet alas, when we have done all this, we have but the shell of Knowledge and the superficial part of Understanding.

*The world by Wisdom knew not God,*  
1 Cor. i. 21. And unless the Father of Divine Truth's be pleas'd to touch our Hearts with a Coal from his Altar, and to *direct our steps into the way of truth*, we shall grope in the dark, and tho' we live in the Sun-shine of the Gospel, we shall lose our way for want of  
Light.

Light. God has indeed divulg'd his saving Knowledge plainly enough to the weakest Capacity of us Christians; but yet unless he be pleas'd in mercy to open our Hearts as he did *Lydia's*, Acts 16. 14. we shall never practice what we know, or attend to what we have read; unless God be pleas'd to give us sight of our Sins, and convince us of the great want and necessity of a Redeemer; we shall never either repent of the former, or set an estimate upon the latter; but *the word of God it self tho' sharper than a two edged sword will be but a dead letter, and prove the savour of death unto death* unto every one of us, unless the God of Light open our Eyes that we may know his way and walk in his truth, and therefore,

Secondly, 'Tis necessary that in imitation of the Holy *Psalmist*, we  
pray



pray unto him that he will vouchsafe us this Favour; *Teach me thy way, O Lord, &c.*

*If any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth unto all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.* 'Tis one of the great Priviledges of a Christian, that he can have immediate access to Heaven, and is fully assur'd that if he ask any thing as he ought it shall be given. There are some things indeed which we are not inordinately to wish or pray for, such as Riches, Honour or the like. But here we may ask without limitation, without Mounds or Boundaries; we can never be too wise or too good; and therefore the greater share of these things that we pray for, and the more earnestly that we supplicate for them, the more acceptable are our Petitions to him that *sitteth upon the throne of grace.* And therefore  
fore

fore since we can receive nothing except it be given us from heaven, *John 3. 27.* For the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps, *Jer. 10. 23.* How greatly doth it behove us to ask for the old paths where the good way is and walk therein, that we may find rest unto our souls. *Jer. 6. 16.* If we be Afflicted and in Misery, how passionately do we implore deliverance out of our Distress; how does our Trouble wing our Devotion, and send us to the mercy seat for a speedy Relief. In trouble, saith the Prophet, have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them. *Isaiah 26. 16.* And shall we then so far bring our Prudence into question; as to prefer a Temporal Good before an Eternal Blessing. Shall we be more solicitous about the freedom of our Bodies, than the ease and quiet of

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our Minds, and more importunately supplicate for Peace and Plenty, than for the repast of Conscience, or the Ineffable Grace of God? *God giveth freely and upbraideth not;* and therefore 'tis a certain Signature, that we set a very small estimate upon the Grace of God and Spiritual Understanding, if we do not think it worth our asking for. He can indeed fill our Mouths, if he pleases, with good things, tho' they be empty of Prayers and Thanksgivings; but yet he hath through the whole Tenure of the Holy Scriptures, given us to understand that he excepts this Homage and Obeisance from us, and that he will have all Mankind fall prostrate at his Footstool. 'Twas God's Proposition to his own Son; *ask of me and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance;* and it was his constant dealing with his chosen

chosen People Israel, then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you; and ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. *Jer.* 29. 12, 13. And you may at large see, *Ezek.* 36. from the 24. to the 37. verse, upon what Terms it is, that they must expect his Mercies. *A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh, v. 26. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them, &c. And then he concludes all, v. 37. Thus saith the Lord, I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them. He will not bestow his Blessings even upon his own chosen People, unless they cry unto him with their hearts, Hos.*

7. 14. and cry mightily unto God, *Jon.*  
 3. 5. seeking the Lord of hosts, *Zech.*  
 8. 21. And therefore if ever we intend  
 that he shall bless us in turning e-  
 very one of us from our iniquities;  
 we must with Solomon ask an under-  
 standing heart, and with our Prophet  
 beg of him to renew a right spirit  
 within us; we must with Holy  
 Raptures cry out with him, *Psa.*  
 19. 7. &c. The law of the Lord is perfect  
 converting the soul, the testimony of the Lord  
 is sure, making wise the simple, the sta-  
 tutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the  
 heart, the commandment of the Lord is  
 pure, enlightening the eyes, the fear of  
 the Lord is clean, enduring for ever;  
 the judgments of the Lord are true,  
 and righteous altogether; more to be de-  
 sired are they than gold, yea than much  
 fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the  
 hony comb; moreover by them is thy ser-  
 vant warned, and in keeping them there  
 is great reward. Teach me thy way  
 therefore, O Lord, and I will walk in thy  
 truth.

*truth.* Which leads me to the third and last Proposition, *viz.*

That if upon our Petitions, God be pleas'd to *teach* us *his way*, we are strictly oblig'd to *walk in it*.

The best Prescriptions if unapplied, tend nothing to the repairing of my Health; nor doth the Wiſest Counſel advantage me any thing, if not rightly made uſe of; the beſt ſpread Table will not ſatiſfie my craving Appetite, unleſs it's Viands be taken in at the Mouth, nor will the choiceſt Cordials reſreſh me, if carried only in my Pocket. And as in Temporals, ſo is it in Concerns of an higher nature. The Spiritual *balm of Gilead* will not cure my putrify'd Sores, nor will the *blood of Jeſus* be Baſamick, if not applyed to my wounded Conſcience. *The ſpirit of the Lord is upon me, becauſe he hath anointed me to preach the goſpel to the poor, he hath*



*sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord,* says the Prophet *Isaiah* of our Blessed Saviour, *Isaiah* 61. 1. But now to what purpose is all this, if the poor wilfully refuse to hear, and the broken heart will not be healed: If the *Captive* will hug his Chains and condemn his Liberty, and the *blind* chuse darkness rather than light; if the *bruised* will not be cured, and they be obstinately deaf to whom the Gospel is Preached. Invincible Ignorance does indeed in a very great measure excuse, but Men that are enlightned by these bright Sun-beams of the Gospel, can plead nothing in favour of themselves upon that account. For that Ignorance is wilful, and therefore deadly, when Men on purpose shut their

their Eyes, least they should be disturbed by the convictions of Conscience; when they are afraid to look within themselves, and know the dangerousness of their Condition; are you resolved to continue in some habitual Sin, and therefore endeavour to *put far from them the evil day*, and least the Beast of Prey within them should be disturb'd, lock up and barricado their Understanding, and shut out the light of Truth from shining upon them, dare not search into the great Mysteries and Method of Salvation; least their darling Sin should be disturb'd, or at least their Mind be so strongly convicted, that if they should go on yet in their own Sins, they should highly aggravate their own Damnation; in a word, are resolv'd to sleep the sleep of Death, and desire (if it must be so) to go to Hell without disturbance?

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But yet, even to such as these God is so gracious as to give them frequent Items of the dangerousness of their Condition. The certainty of our everlasting State is so riveted in our very Constitution, that we cannot forbear having now and then a solicitous thought about it. No Man was ever so far out of his Wits, through a sinful Frenzy, but that he had his Lucid Intervals; no Person unless his Conscience was cauterized, or to use the Apostles Expression, *seared with an hot iron*, but has now and then some Rays of the Divine Spirit darting Pious Thoughts into him, nothing less than a brute Beast, which hath no Understanding, can be so void of Sense, as not to reflect a little what they are a doing, or whether they are a going. 'Tis true indeed, Men in the heat of Wine and Lust, may be utterly unmindful of God  
and

and their own Souls, but the round of their Debauches cannot be so interrupted, as that there shall be no *Break*, no vacant minute of Consideration ; even the height of their Amours will create a Fatigue and Nausea, and the heat of their intemperate Bowls will now and then interrupt their Repose, and make their Minds as uneasy as their Bodies ; and then they can no more avoid Reflection, than they can Thinking. Nay God hath been so kind even to the Profligate and Profane, that he will not suffer them to be at entire quiet in their Sins, but will ever and anon be whispering in their Ears ; *this is the way, walk in it* ; but if they still go on to grieve that holy spirit of God, which would seal them to the day of redemption ; he will not indeed always strive with man, but will at last  
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*give him up to a reprobate sense and a strong delusion.*

For God on purpose Communicates the Blessed Rays of his Knowledge to us, to bring us to himself, and illuminates our Understandings with his wholesome Truths, that we may *serve him in righteousness and true holiness*; and therefore unless those Pious Suggestions of his make us better Men and better Christians, we shall fall under the severe Character of that *unprofitable servant*, who *buried his talent in a napkin*, and by that means *shall be without excuse whilst we know God, but in our works deny him.* Tit. 1. 16. and *shew unto the world that we are wise to do evil, but to good we have no knowledge,* 1 Cor. 4. 22.

To lay down all the Obligations which lie upon *us*, who *know the will of God*, to live according to it, would be too tedious and needless,  
I hope

I hope in such an Assembly as this; however since in this profligate Age, we stand in need of all the Motives that can be to stir us up to *live as becomes the gospel of Christ*. I shall for a Conclusion of this Head, desire you to consider these following Particulars.

*First*, Consider I beseech you in general, what an *heavy damnation* those Persons bring upon themselves, *who know the will of God, and do it not*. *The times of ignorance God winked at, Acts 17. 30. ὡς ἔδειξεν*. He overlooked as it were, and took little or no notice of those Sins of our Fore-fathers, which were acted under the influence of Pagan Darkness. He seldom *poured out his fury upon the Heathen who knew him not, or upon the families who had not opportunity of calling upon his name, Jer. 10. 25*. He hath been *found of those that sought him not. Is. 65. 1*. But  
those



those to whom he hath revealed himself, and *made known the way of salvation*; if they will not come to Christ that they may have life, *John 5. 40. but despise the word of God*; he will not be found of them, but *they shall be destroyed for ever. Prov. 13. 13. i. e.* They are so far inexcusable, that the Sense and Knowledge which they have of their Duty, will highten their Misery, and aggravate their Torments in the next World, will prove the very Essence of Hell, and quicken that *worm which never dies*, and add Fuel to that *fire which is not quenched*.

Men may put a cheat upon their own Souls, and blind and hoodwink their own Understanding, but the Allwise God *searcheth Jerusalem as with candles*, dives into the secrets of Men's Hearts, and takes a strict view of all their Faculties.

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He considers what advantages they have had of Hearing, Reading, and Practising his Holy Word, and if they have had the means of Grace, their Precipitancy and their Folly in despising the hopes of Glory, shall be no excuse at his Bar, but to him to whom much hath been given, from him shall much be required; And if the digging about and manuring of the fig-tree will not make it prolifick but it shall continue to be fruitless and barren, he will cut it down, and not suffer it to cumber the ground: If Men will be so mad and foolish as to delight to do evil, when they know to do better; he will bind them in everlasting chains to the judgment of the great day.

Which leads me to the last Consideration, which I shall at this time offer to your serious Thoughts, viz.

That if this be the usual Method

thod of God's Proceeding; consider I beseech you in particular, what Dealings we the Sinful People of this Land may expect from him.

'Tis the Gospel Rule, that *to him that hath shall be given, and to him that hath not, i. e. that hath not made a right use of that which he hath, shall be taken away, even that which he hath. Mat. 25. 29. i. e. If God Almighty be pleas'd to vouchsafe us a share of his good Spirit, to direct and guide us into the way of Truth, and the Path's of Salvation, and we grieve that holy spirit, and refuse to hearken to that heavenly voice; he will in anger withdraw himself, and our latter state shall be worse than our first. It would be better for us never to have known the precepts of the gospel, or the Will of our Redeemer, than knowing of them not to have walked in them. The dark Heathen who hath never had the*

the Opportunities of the Word Preached, never received the Tenders of the Blood of Jesus, shall stand before the Throne of God, with less Horror and Astonishment, than the enlighten'd, but wicked Christian. And if this be so, what may we of this sinful Nation, think of our selves?

For to what People under Heaven hath God appeared, or to what nation hath he so stretched out his arm, or shew'd his right arm, as to this of ours. We once sat in darkness and the shadow of death, and were fast bound in misery and Iron, we grop'd in the thick darkness of Idolatry, and were long hood-wink'd with the black cloud of superstition, instead of which the bread of life is now as plentiful amongst us as the stones in the street, and yet alas, we trample upon it, and make it as vile and contemptible. God has been pleas'd not only to vouchsafe  
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us the Knowledge of his Son, and the *light of his countenance*, but he hath suffered us to be Taught and Educated in the best Religion in the Christian World. He hath not only *taught us in his way and his truth*, but hath taught us it in it's height and perfection, freed from a foolish Superstition on one hand, or a schismatical Slovenliness on the other. And what Returns we have made for these Mercies, I am afraid to mention, and you may blush to hear. We do not indeed now *swear by those that are no Gods*, but we every minute prophane the Sacred *name of the God of Israel our redeemer*, by needless Oaths and extravagant Curses; nay, least we should fall short of our Fore-fathers, in our Irreverence towards our Maker; how do we rack our Wits to invent new Oaths and damn our Brother (whilst we seem to be in jest) with all the Zeal and

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Seriousness of a *Religionist*, or a *Devoto*. We do not indeed prostrate our selves to the Whore of *Babylon*, but God knows, tho' we pretend to *abhor Spiritual Fornication*, yet all manner of *Uncleanness* is rise amongst us, and the heat and fire of *Lust*, is so far from being reputed *Sinful*, that Men even boast of their *Wanton Amours*, and take a pride in vaunting of their *lascivious acquests*. We are not (as our Forefathers were) debar'd the liberty of *Reading* those lively Oracles, the *Sacred Scriptures*: But, how little delight do we take in the searching into those *Divine Truths*? And how is a *Play* or a *Romance* look'd upon as a more gentile *Entertainment*? We have, blessed be God, the free use of those *two Sacraments* which are only necessary to *salvation*; but how little do we consider of the *Conditions* which we swear to,

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in the former? And how often do we heedlessly turn our backs upon the latter? How little do we bethink our selves, that we solemnly renounc'd the world, the flesh and the devil in our baptism? And how often do we wilfully refuse to confirm that Covenant, by our eating and drinking the body and blood of Christ? In a Word, God Almighty hath used all possible means to bring us to himself; hath enlightened our understanding that we might know him, and hath written our Duty with the Pencil of a Sun-beam; hath penn'd out his Will and Commandments in such legible Characters, that he that runs may read, and he that (literally speaking) cannot read, has the Ambassadors of Christ to direct his steps in the paths of everlasting peace; and therefore if we still go on in the ways of iniquity, and refuse to walk in those truths which

he hath so plainly taught us ; what shall we say to our God, what to our selves ? 'Tis a strong Argument to Obedience, which *Moses* us'd to the Children of *Israel*, Deut. 10. 12, 13, 14, 15. and very well befits our case. And now *Israel*, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy scul, to keep the commandments of the Lord and his statutes, which I commanded thee this day for thy good ? Behold the heaven, and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is, only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even *you* above all people, as it is this day. God might, had he so pleased, have continued this Nation Pagan to this very day, he might still have

suffer'd us to be born of Heathen Parents, and to have labour'd under the hard Bondage of a worse than an *Ægyptian* Darknes. But we found grace and favour in the sight of the Lord, and his arm brought salvation to us; and therefore, blessed be the God and father of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in *Christ*. And hath made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he had purposed in himself, *Eph. 1. 3, 9*. But then, if after God hath done all these great things for us, we rudely cast his Precepts behind our backs, and turn his grace into wantonness, if we have received the grace of God in vain, and after we have come to the knowledge of God's truth, have even denyed the Lord that bought us; what can we expect, but that he will make bare his arm,

arm, and bring back our feet again into the shadow of death.

'Tis a sad Calamity which we find threatened *Amos*, 8. 11. 12. Behold the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, or a thirst of water, but of hearing the words of the Lord, and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run too and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it. God can as easily pluck up, as he can plant, and can with as much ease drive us who are seated by the Fountains of living water, into some part of the barren Heathen world, as he could carry the children of Jacob into captivity, or bring the sons of Israel out of *Ægypt*; but least this should seem too foreign; he can by the least Word of his Mouth bring us again under the Dominion of

Idolatry, or place us under the Saw or Yoke of Antichristian Fierceness, and should we again by our *not walking in his known truths*, provoke him to do so (as 'tis greatly to be fear'd we shall) should he deprive us of his true Worship, and stop the passage to his Temple, or his Altar ; oh ! how passionately should we bewail our forlorn condition, and how earnestly should we cry out with the *holy Prophet*. *My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God ? Oh ! when shall I come and appear before God ?* *Psa. 42.*

2. I need not remind you what amazement and concern the greatest part of this whole Nation was lately in, upon the bare apprehension of having their *Candlestick* remov'd from them, and how you have justified your Zeal for the late Revolution, upon the Pretensions of securing that dear Religion which

which you so much value. But give me leave to ask you what reason Men have to believe you are in earnest, when your *wicked lives* give a *lie* to your Profession; when you are daily guilty of such *wickedness* as will *separate* between you and your God, and will provoke Heaven to deprive you of that Religion you so much boast of. *Liberty* and *Property* may bear some sway with you, but never go about to put the *Word of Truth* the *Protestant Religion* into the Ballance, when your sinful Actions so openly declare, that like Gallio *your care for none of these things*. Never pretend that you are abundantly satisfied and pleas'd with your Perswasion, or that you are fully convinc'd of the Reasonableness of it, when your vicious Lives run thus counter to the word of truth, as it is in *Jesus*.



The best Argument of our Belief, is our good Conversation, and the only Criterion of our Knowledge is Practice, for in effect, a Man *knows* no more than he *does*; or at leastwise in Matters of Religion, his *knowledge* without *practice* will but bespeak him a greater Fool; as serving to no other end but to increase his Damnation. Better never know, never be taught the way of Truth, then not to walk in it; better have been born amongst rude *Indians*, or brutish *Americans*, than being brought up in a civilized Nation, and educated at the Feet of the ever blessed Jesus; we yet should despise our Master, and disregard his Precepts. What will it avail us at the great day of Account, to say, *Lord*, we were of thy reform'd Religion? we were born in a Country where all Pagan Idolatry, or modern Superstition had

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no Seat, but thy Worship, thy undefiled Law was daily Taught and Preach'd amongst us; we liv'd in a Nation which acknowledg'd thee to be the true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent; we had a day in seven peculiarly set apart in Commemoration of our blessed Redeemer's Resurrection; we had a Sacrament by which we were enter'd into thy Covenant of Grace, and solemnly swear to serve thee in sincerity and truth; and we had another in order to continue the remembrance of thy bitter death and passion, until this thy second coming; we had thy holy Law and Statutes plainly laid open to us, and had thy way and thy truth engraven'd with the Finger of God upon our Hearts; what I say, will all this stand us instead when the Judge of Angels and of Men, shall with an angry Countenance, and with a just Indignation say unto us,  
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*I know ye not, depart from me, ye workers of iniquity. If we be workers of iniquity, let our Profession or Religion be what it will, God will not know, he will not own us to be his, and our having Abraham to our father, our having enjoyed all these great and precious Priviledges, will be so far from alleviating our Sorrow, that it will heat the Furnace of God's Wrath seven times hotter for us.*

*O! consider this, all ye that forget God, least he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you! Consider how Wickedly Foolish you are, whilst you live in the willful obstinate Breach of the known Law of God, and act against the strength of Reason, and the convictions of Conscience. Consider how much more tollerable it will be for Tyre and Sydon, Sodom and Gomorrha, Nations over-run with Lust, Ignorance,*

rance, and Barbarity, then for you who knew the way of God, but would not walk in it. 'Tis the Apostles Argument, *James 4. 17.* *To him who knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin.* It is Sin Emphatically, it is the height, the Quintessence of Sin, that I knew to do better, and yet deliberately acted against that Knowledge. 'Tis part of the Essence of that unpardonable Sin against the Holy Ghost, to commit Iniquity against a full Conviction, and wilfully to sin against an enlightened Understanding: And therefore unless we, we who are a People, who blessed be God have the fairest Opportunities of any People in the World to get to Heaven, who are not only taught of God, *John 6. 45.* but have *Moses and the Prophets* daily to instruct us; who have the best Church for our Mother, and  
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the Holy Jesus for our Tutor; who have the Ordinances of God continually amongst us, and his Ministers and Ambassadors to *teach us his way*, and *instruct us in his truth*, who cannot chuse but *know the way of the Lord*, unless we on purpose wink that we may not see, and stop our ears that we may not hear, and thereby be converted and saved, unless we, I say, resolve to have the hottest place in the Regions of everlasting Misery; it becomes us above all Mankind to *suffer the word of Christ to dwell in us richly*, Col. 3. 16. and to do those things which we have both learned and received, and heard and seen. Phil. 4. 9. Since we have been so plentifully instructed and taught in the Way of God; it highly becomes us to take up the Resolution of our Holy Prophet, and to walk in his Truth. *Teach me thy way,*

way, O Lord, I will walk in thy truth.

Unto him therefore, who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour; be glory and majesty, dominion and power, now and ever. Amen. Jude 24. 25. Blessed, and for ever blessed are all they, &c.

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GEN.



Gen. 4. the 1<sup>st</sup>. part of the 7<sup>th</sup>. Verse.

*If thou dost well, shall thou not be accepted? And if thou dost not well, sin lieth at the door.*

**A**Lthough God has been pleased to promise Eternal Blessings to every Son of *Adam*, who shall *pass his sojourning here*, according to the Dictates of right Reason, yet such is the Folly, such the Wickedness of Mankind, as to *chuse the pleasures of sin for a season, rather than the ineffable joys which are at God's right hand for evermore*. And therefore Almighty God (who is desirous not to leave himself without witness) hath endued each particular Person with such powerful Convictions of Mind, and such irrefragable

gible Evidence of Conscience, as that upon every Action he shall be either *absolv'd or condemn'd*, his thoughts the mean while accusing or excusing of him, *Rom. 2. 15.*

And indeed, were it not for the natural checks of Conscience, and the discomposures of Mind, which are the result of Sin and Vice, into what Enormities would not Mankind hurry himself? For Men are generally so immerst in the Concerns of this World, that they seldom or never give themselves time to contemplate or reflect upon the Joys or Sorrows of the next, or think of any thing but what gratifies or Thwarts their bodily Enjoyments. Let but the Man take his swing in sensual Objects, and be compleatly caress'd with the voluptuous Dalliances of the World or the Flesh; let his Mind sit easie and undisturb'd, and all his Faculties  
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be indulg'd with the soft Entertainment of gentle Thoughts and pleasing Reflections ; and he desires no farther Heaven, but can be content to *build his tabernacle here*, and to make choice of this World as his only *abiding city*. Nay, farther, let him but sin on without Remorse, and pursue the Paths of Wickedness with an undisturb'd tranquillity. Let him but miss the Rods and Axes of a temporal Authority, and *not be plagued like other men* ; let not judgment be executed speedily upon him for his evil deeds, nor the terrors of a guilty mind make him *afraid*, and 'tis great odds, but he will think God *such an one as himself*, or from the Indulgence and long Suffering of the Almighty, conclude that there is no such Being. This is the Folly, this is the way of unthinking Man. And for this Cause when God breathed the breath of life  
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into man, he was pleas'd to rivet therewith such natural notices of his Duty, and such an innate Knowledge of good and evil Actions, as should upon occasions be sufficient on the one hand, to signifie to him upon what terms he was to expect Acceptance and Favour with God, and on the other hand, what would occasion God's displeasure to arise against him, and make him obnoxious to anguish and sorrow, both in this World and the next. *If thou dost well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou dost not well, sin lyeth at the door.*

Which words are the Expostulatory Interrogation of God to Cain, upon his being very wroth, because the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering, but unto Cain and his offering had not respect. v. 4. 5, 6.

It appears by the Context, that these two Sons of Adam, brought the

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former of them of the fruit of the ground, and the latter of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof, as Offerings unto the Lord: What occasion'd these Brothers to offer these Sacrifices to God; whether they did it by the Example of their Father *Adam*, or by direction from the שְׁכִינָה or Divine Majesty, or by the instinct of Nature, or by what other Intimation, I shall not stay here to determine; certain it is Sacrifice was offered, the first that we read of by *Cain*, and the second by *Abel*. But it seems *Cain*, either because he did not bring the first of his Fruit, or the fullest Ears of Corn, or brought them grudgingly, or thorow some other defect in the matter or manner of it, mov'd God to have no respect to his offering; whereas his younger Brother *Abel*, who was equally taught in these Rites and Mysteries, yet  
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being a Religious observer of the Rules of Nature, did with a Pious Mind, and with a sincere Affection to God, *offer up the firstlings and the fat of his flock*; thereby signifying to God how grateful a Sense he had of his Benefaction, and how suitable he thought it was to devote what was the best, and without blemish to that Almighty Benefactor, from whose hand he had receiv'd his Being, and all that he enjoy'd. And this was it which was so highly acceptable to God, that *his countenance shone* graciously both upon the Sacrifice and the Offering; thereby declaring that it was an Holocaust with which his Soul was well pleased. But at this, *Cain becomes very wroth*, and his *countenance fell*. He was extremely angry and sullen, and knit his Brows to see his younger Brother receive the first Blessing, and be (as it were)



congratulated from the Mouth of God, with a *well done thou good and faithful servant*. Whilst he who had the Right of Primogeniture, and was *Adam's* first born Son, had his sheaves slighted and his Offering, which had cost him the Sweat of his Brows wholly disregarded. This moves his Indignation against his Brother, and makes him fully resolve that *Abel* should suffer, whereas *Cain* alone was guilty; to check which malicious Intention, God speaks to him, as in my Text.

*If thou dost well, shalt thou not be accepted? But if thou dost not well, sin lyeth at the door. i. e.*

Dost thou think that I have not an impartial respect to true Goodness wheresoever I find it; or what reason hast thou to believe that I judge not righteous judgment, but judge by outward appearance? What is *Abel*, or ten Thousand such more to me  
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then thou art? For am not I the universal Parent of Mankind? Who can with my single *Fiat*, make more Worlds then there now are Persons? Nay, have I not Myriads of glorious Angels, and the whole Host of Heaven already to do me Service? And therefore what great Glory would it add to me to have the Sacrifice of *Abel* prefer'd before the Offering of *Cain*? But yet, since I have grounded my Proceedings upon the eternal rectitude of my *Will*, which cannot be otherways than just and equitable; it must of consequence follow, that *he that does well* shall enjoy the favourable Light of my Countenance, and the approbation of his own Mind, shall be happy in the Serenity of Thought, and be blest with that *peace of God which passeth all understanding*. And on the contrary, that he who opposeth the Laws of Nature, and is remiss in

his Duty, and unmindful of my Service, should feel the marks of my Displeasure, and be perpetually haunted with the Terrors of a guilty Mind. And if thou weighest thy self in this Ballance, thou may'st easily see what is the occasion of my dislike; 'tis not the Man but his Mind; not the intrinsick Excellency of the Offering, but the manner in which it was offered, which made it acceptable in my sight; for *to obey, is to me better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of lambs.* And therefore if thou hadst appear'd before me with the same sincerity that thy Brother did; thou shouldest have been equally accepted as he was; but since thou art convinc'd of thy own Hypocrisie, thou canst not wonder that guilt and shame take hold of thee, and that thy wickedness should find thee out. For if thou dost well, shalt thou

*thou not be accepted? But if thou dost not well, sin lieth at the door.*

From which Words, thus Paraphras'd, I shall advance these two Propositions.

*First*, That 'tis our Sin alone, which occasioneth us not to be accepted with God: If thou dost well, shalt thou not be accepted?

*Secondly*, That Punishment is the certain consequent of Wickedness and Impiety, imply'd in the latter part of my Text. And if thou dost not well, Sin lieth at thy door.

*First*, That 'tis our Sin alone which occasioneth us not to be accepted with God. If thou dost well, shalt thou not be accepted?

What it was to *dowell*; *Cain* was sufficiently instructed by the Voice of Nature; and we (blessed be God) have been much plainlier taught; and therefore I need not

spend more time in the explaining of it. But the Interpretations have been so various, that there may seem somewhat of difficulty in the rightly expounding what is here meant by *being accepted*. Some Persons imagine, that the Expression has respect to his Countenance, which was dejected and fallen, and make the Words import thus much: *Hadst thou done well, as Abel did, thou wouldst then have mov'd with as erect a countenance as he did.* i. e. Thou wouldest have enjoy'd the pleasure and satisfaction of a good Conscience, and consequently have had no reason to be cast down; but wouldst have enjoy'd a compleat acquiescence of Mind within thy self; and this they deduct from the Original נשׂו which they render *erit tibi elevatio*. Again,

*Secondly,* According to the Chalde paraphrase the Word נשׂו signifies *remittere*;

tere ; and *St. Hierom* makes it import as much as *dimitteur tibi*, and then the Words will run thus ; *if thou do well*, i. e. If thou repent thee of this Fault, and will hereafter do well ; I will pardon and remit thy Transgression ; I will absolve thee from thy Sin, and will reward thee for thy future Obedience.

I shall not be so positive as to determine which of these Expositions carry the greatest weight ; they are both of them the Opinions of Learned Men, and seem each of them consentaneous to Reason ; and therefore with deference to these profound Persons, I shall touch upon the Sense of each of them, and branch out my first Proposition into these two following Particulars.

*First*, That doing well will secure an easie and quiet Conscience to us.

*Secondly*,



*Secondly*, That though like *Cain* we have fail'd in our Duty, yet if we sincerely repent us of our Sin, and live uprightly for the future שם God will absolve us from our Sin, and reward us for our future Obedience.

*First*, Doing well will secure an easie and quiet Conscience to us. *If thou do well, shalt thou not be accepted?* i. e. Hadst thou done well, as *Abel* did, thy Countenance would have no reason to have fallen, but thou mightest have gone erect, and have enjoy'd the pleasure and satisfaction of a good Conscience.

'Tis the Observation of the judiciously Learned Bishop *Sanderson*; that there is not in all the old Testament, an Hebrew Word which doth precisely and peculiarly signifie the Conscience; but one of these two Words is always made use of to express it, לב or לבב and רוח; the first

first whereof does signifie the Heart, and the latter the Spirit of Man; thus, *Prov. 4. v. 23. Keep thy heart with all diligence*, i. e. have a diligent care of thy Conscience, and *2 Sam. 24. 10. And David's heart smote him*, i. e. his Conscience reprov'd him. And as for the Word *רוח* we read, *Prov. 18. 14. The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?* Which is the same, as if Solomon had said, a Man of a good Conscience will patiently endure whatever Calamities shall befall him; but an afflicted and guilty Conscience is an insupportable burthen?

Which being premis'd, you may perfectly understand that by saying, that doing well, will secure an easie and a quiet Conscience to us, is only meant; that our Hearts will not misgive or upbraid us, will not revile or reproach us, but will be  
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continually applauding and commending us for all those good Actions which we perform. That our Spirits will not sink under any Burthen; but let our outward Condition be what it will, let us meet with never so many Storms and Tempests, tho' they ruffle and somewhat discompose us, yet our Spirits will be sufficiently supported with the Sense of having done well, and our Innocence will be a substantial guard against all Assailants.

This World is compar'd (and not unfitly) to *a sea of glass*, Rev. 15. 1. denoting the brittle inconstant State of it, mixed with such Troubles and Afflictions, Tryals and Persecutions; that 'tis not possible but every Man will meet with a large share of them. But then, what will all these signify to him, whose Heart justifies him in all  
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his Proceedings, and whose conscience beareth witness, that in all simplicity and godly sincerity, he has had his conversation in the world? What is there that can create any uneasiness to that Man, who has a most sure ground of Comfort within himself? Or how can he be dissatisfied at any thing, whose Mind is quiet and serene? Should God be pleas'd for the manifesting his own Power, or the tryal of our Patience, or the advancement of his own Glory, to lay his visiting Hand upon us, and make us endure a great sight of afflictions, Heb. 10. 32. Would it not amidst all our Tryals, be a sufficient Consolation to us; could we but boast with St. Paul, that we had always exercis'd our selves to keep a conscience void of offence, both towards God and towards man? And be able to support us under the severest conflicts, that we could  
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appeal to God, and plead the *uprightness* and *sincerity* of our hearts. Would not the Innocency of our Minds bear us up in the most forlorn Condition, and be a sufficient comfort to us, amidst all our Sufferings?

It was the saying of a great Statesman of our own (when he was to make his Reply to some who had unjustly accus'd him) *I will rest henceforward in peace, in the house of my own conscience, and approving my self to God, will not value tho false witnesses, rise up against me.* And indeed, what matter is it, tho' Men revile and speak evil of us, so long as our Conscience speaks comfortably unto us, so long as it proclaims a Jubile to our Minds, and pours in Oyl into our wounded Hearts? What tho' we be set in the midst of Dangers and Adversities, and surrounded with Storms

Storms and Tempests on every side, so long as we enjoy Peace and Quiet at home, and our Thoughts reproach us not in the Day of Wrath? *A good man, says Solomon, shall be satisfied from himself, i. e. tho' all things without threaten and perplex him, tho' his Reputation in the eye of some run low, and he be cramp'd with the lean Revenues of a disregarded Poverty; yet he has inward Joy enough to create him a continual feast, and to refresh him when he is weary; he is perpetually furnish'd with the repast of Angels, and has meat to eat, which wicked men know not of. And tho' all his friends forsake him, and his neighbours and kinsfolks should stand a far off and shake their heads at him, yet he has an inward Witness that will not be brib'd to joyn partly with them; nor will it reproach him so long as he lives? For did ever any*



any Man's Conscience accuse him for having done well? Did his Heart ever upbraid him, that he had serv'd God, or liv'd Virtuouſly? Was ever any Man yet aſham'd that he had reliev'd the Needy, or defended the Oppreſſed, or Vindicated the juſt Rights of the Orphan, or the Widow? Canſt thou name the Man, whoſe Mind ever reproach'd him from having done honourably for his King and Country, or his Friend? Or doſt thou know the Perſon whoſe Conſcience has revil'd him for having feared God and honoured his Parents? Do not on the contrary vertuous Actions; carry a preſent Reward with them, and chear the Man, amidſt the greateſt Difficulties? Are they not continually whiſpering a ſilent Joy to the Mind; and when the ſullen Night of Afflictions threaten to obſcure our Peace;

Peace; do they not make out that saying of the *Psalmist*? that *light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart*: *Ps. 97. 11.* But then above all, do they not secure this Peace to us, when we have most need of it; and when we shall every one of us wish for it? Let me die the death of the righteous, was *Balaam's* wish, and 'twill certainly be the desire of every one of us, if we ever come upon a sick Bed; and is not this the never-failing consequent of a well spent Life? For with what joy does that Man look beyond the grates of Flesh; who has all along had his conversation in heaven? How comfortably does he quit this earthly Tabernacle; who can with assurance say with *St. Paul*, *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness*? And how desirous is he

to be dissolv'd, and to be with Christ; who by patient continuance in well-doing, hath sought for glory and honour, and immortality? Rom. 2. 7. And when grim Death makes his close approaches to him, and his Candle is just twinkling within the Socket; what inexpressible joy does he then conceive from the Reflections of a well-spent Life? And how does his Spirit dance for joy, that mortality is now going to be swallowed up of life? With what Triumph do good Men insult over that pale-fac'd Tyrant; and how does a good Conscience cheer them up in their strongest Agonies? In a word, how will this never-failing Friend of ours rejoyce with us in Prosperity, comfort us in Adversity, counsel us in our Doubts, encourage us in our Difficulties, secure us in our Dangers, and support us in the Hour of our Death? And there-

therefore, who would not *continue in well-doing*, that he might be thus *accepted*? i. e. That he may enjoy the Pleasures and Satisfaction of a good Conscience? *If thou dost well, shalt thou not be accepted?*

And now surely, we must needs acknowledge, that it nearly concerns every one of us to endeavour to do well; *conscience is a domestick judge, a kind of a familiar God to us*, and as it approves, or disapproves of our Actions; so will our Content, or our Dissatisfaction be. And therefore, since Content and Satisfaction is the Summ of all Happiness, and Happiness is that which all the Philosophy in the World aims at, and without which, our Lives will be a Thralldom and a Burthen to us; how nearly does it concern us, to consult every thing which shall tend to so good an end? Did it require great Skill, or vast Knowledge, pro-

found Learning, or immense Parts, were Riches or Honour, large Possessions, or high Renown, necessary Ingredients to create our Felicity; the generality of Men would fall rather under our Pity than Instruction, and we might commiserate their Wants, but not be capable of relieving their Needs. But blessed be God, there are none of these things absolutely required towards the giving of us inward Peace?

'Tis in every ones breast to *be good*, and *do good*, and he that is and does so, has all the happiness which this World can afford. It requires no great skill to be Vertuous; let us but do all the Good which we understand, and which we have power to do, and that will enable us to do more, and whet our desires to *proceed from one degree of grace unto another, till we come to be perfect men in Christ Jesus.* This life

of ours is as you have heard, a warfaring State, full of Troubles and Disappointment, and we as full of Complaints in it; but yet there is a way you see, by which we may pull out the Sting of all our Sorrows, and *obtain compleat rest to our souls.* There is a Method which will convert our ghastly Cares into pleasant Refreshments, and change the *waters of Marah* into delightful Springs; our Life is surrounded with ten Thousand Difficulties; but 'tis in our power to disarm them all, and make all *our ways, ways of pleasantness, and all our paths peace.* Let us not then complain of those Briers and Thorns which our own Hands have Planted, and which thus sensibly torment us; but let us lay aside those Sins which make them thus sharp and severe, and thereby change them into Rosebuds of Delight and Pleasure. Let



us act as becomes Men and Christians, and by well doing, secure a quiet retiring place in our own Breasts. Let us conscientiously demean our selves thorow the whole Scene of our Earthly Affairs; and let us never be sway'd thorow Interest, or byass'd by Self-love, or intic'd by the Allurements of the Flesh, to do any thing, whereby we shall offer Violence to the Light of our Reason. But whatever our outward Condition be, let us be rigorously severe in securing the Comfort and Peace of our own Consciences; for this will secure to us the Favour of God, whose *loving kindness is better than life it self*; and will thereby enable us to cry out with the Apostles; *who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?* Nay, *in all these things we*  
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are more than conquerors; for who can harm us, whilst we are followers of that which is good? But then,

Secondly, Have we been so unfortunate, as like Cain, to forfeit the Joys of Innocence, by omitting our Duty, or doing those things which render us Evil in the Eyes of God? Have our most specious Pretences of Religion been like his, only False and Hypocritical Acted, for by Ends, or with sinister Designs? Or have we with a narrow Hand, or a grudging Heart, brought our Sacrifice to the Altar, and drawn guilt upon our selves, either upon the account of the Matter or Manner of our Offering; in a word, do our iniquities testify against us, that our back-slidings have been many, and that we have multiplied our transgressions before God? Why, if we do well, we shall still be accepted; and may yet be renewed again by repentance. For

so (as I told you) the *Chaldee* Paraphrase makes the word *new* to import, as *St. Hierom* makes it signify as much as *dimittetur tibi, thy sin shall be pardoned*. And this is the second Head I rais'd from the first Proposition, viz. That tho' like *Cain*, we have fail'd in our Duty, yet if we sincerely repent us of our Sins, and live uprightly for the future; *God is so faithful and just, that he will forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness*.

One of the greatest Blessings that God ever confer'd upon the Sons of Men; was that they might repent and be saved; for such is our natural Propensity to Sin and Wickedness; that there is not one of us, God knows, that can insist upon his own Innocency; but must acknowledge that his iniquities are like the sands upon the sea shore, or chives of grass upon the mountains; and that

no man can tell how oft he hath offended; and therefore, if God should be extream to mark what we have done amiss, and not give us space to repent, or admit us into favour when we did repent, who could abide it? But there is mercy with God, that he may be feared; and to encourage us to put off the old man, and to become new creatures; he hath assur'd us, that at what time soever a sinner turneth from his evil way, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.

And we meet not with fairer Instances of any thing in the whole Tenure of the Holy Scripture, than of those, who after the loss of their Innocence, and the defiling of their Conscience, have been again renewed in the spirit of their minds; and after a dismal train of black Impieties, have thro' God's Mercy been reduc'd into a State of Grace,  
and

and *perfected holiness in the fear of God.*

We find *David*, whom God hath graciously rais'd from a Sheep-hook to a Scepter, despising the Commandments of the Lord, and *doing evil in his sight*, adding *murder* to *uncleanness* and foul *ingratitude* to them both; but yet great as his Sins were, God sends a *Prophet* on purpose to warn him of his Danger, and to awaken his Conscience; and that his Message may be the more effectual, he touches all under this disguise of a Parable; and thereby makes *David* confess, that he had *sinned against the Lord*; which he had no sooner acknowledg'd, but he hears his Absolution express'd; *the Lord hath also put away his sin, thou shalt not die.* 2 Sam. 12. 13.

And to instance in one more; have we recourse to the new Testament, we shall find our Saviour's  
first

*first named Apostle*, Luke 6. 14. who had made Resolutions, and large Promises of his Affection and Fidelity to his Lord and Master; (tho' all forsake thee, yet will not I. Mark 14. 29. We find him, I say, perfidious to his Resolution, and false to his Word; at once, guilty of Cowardise, Breach of Promise and Perjury; and yet no sooner had he committed these accumulated Crimes, but that great lover of Souls, who came on purpose into the world to save sinners, look'd him into sorrow, and made the watchful Cock a Monitor to startle him into repentant Tears; reduc'd him to his Duty, and at last made him die a glorious Martyr, for that cause, whose Author he had so lately deny'd. I might lay down before you many more Instances of the like nature, compris'd in holy Writ; such as *Manasseh, Hezekiah, Ephraim,*



*Ephraim, Mary Magdalen, the Thief upon the Cross, and the like ; in which we find God's Mercy as ready to Pardon, as they to ask ; and upon their Repentance and Submission, absolutely proclaiming that their sins were forgiven them. And it is the opinion of some of the Rabbins ; that Cain himself, tho' he despis'd the grace of God, offer'd in my Text, and went on to do wickedly ; yet at last he had his Sin pardon'd, and his redoubled Transgressions blotted out. But be that how it will, be he pardoned or not ; this is certain ; that be our Sins of never so Crimson a Die, and carry they the blackest Aggravations along with them, if we sincerely repent, and heartily bewail the Iniquities of our life past, and humble our selves under the mighty hand of God, and cry earnestly to him for Pardon and Forgiveness : If after all our scarlet sins,*  
we

*we cloath our selves with shame and confusion of face, and make firm Resolutions, and heartily endeavour to do well for the future; God will take us into his Favour; God will accept us. For if thou dost well, shalt thou not be accepted?*

And now, what greater Motive, what greater Encouragement to Repentance can we have, than to be assur'd that we shall find Mercy if we do Repent? What will move us to newness of Life, if the goodness of God will not effectually do it? Should a Father propose the receiving a very disobedient Child, or a Prince a rebellious Subject into Favour; should a Master be willing to pass by all the Failures of a negligent Servant; or a Friend be willing to pardon the Affronts and Abuses of an imperious Person, whom he had formerly oblig'd, upon condition that they would acknowledge-

knowledge their Faults, and faithfully Honour and Serve them for the future ; should we not highly tax these Persons of Folly and Ingratitude, if they should not accept of the Conditions ; but obstinately continue in their evil Courses to their own destruction ? Since therefore, this Case is our own ; since we must every one of us acknowledge that we have grievously *sinned against God our father which is in heaven,* and been *Rebellious against the King of Glory ;* since we are sensible, that tho' we *know* our heavenly *masters will ;* yet many a time *we did it not,* but have been basely ingrateful to him, who has been our best Friend, and only Benefactor ; how befitting, how becoming is it for us to *humble our selves under the mighty hand of God ?* who we are assur'd (if we do so) will not only pardon our Offences, but *receive us graciously, and ex-*  
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*alt us in due time.* Let us therefore immediately fly to God for Succor, and with repentant Tears humble our selves before him. He is able (and he is as willing as he is able) *to save to the uttermost all those that come unto him*; and therefore let us make our early Approaches to him, that we may find Favour in his sight. He has for Encouragement given us signal Instances of his pardoning Mercy; and he is no less gracious, no less bountiful now then he was *in the time of old*; and therefore let his abundant Grace wing our Repentance, and send us with a Lovers speed to beg pardon of him. Let us *confess our sins unto the Lord, and our iniquities let us not hide,* Pf. 32. 5. But let us *remember our ways, and all our doings wherein we have been defiled*; and let us loath our selves in our own sight for all our evils that we have committed; Ezek.

20. v. 43. and let us immediately betake our selves to newness of life, *putting of the old man with his deeds*; and then let us boldly remind him of his Promise; that he will blot out all our transgressions, and remember our iniquities no more. In a word, let us wholly and intirely devote our selves to the Service of God; and where we find we have done amiss, let us resolve for the future to amend our ways and our doings, and to cleanse our selves from all filthiness, both of flesh and spirit; so will God avert from us all that storm of heavy Wrath, which our Sins have deserved, and accept us graciously into his Favour; translating us from the Miseries of this sinful World, into the Regions of everlasting Joy and Felicity. Which God of his infinite mercy, &c.

GEN.

## GENESIS IV. v. 8.

*And if thou dost not well, sin lieth at the door.*

**I** Proceed now to speak in the second Proposition, viz. That Remorse and Punishment is the certain consequent of Sin and Impiety, imply'd the latter part of my Text. *And if thou dost not well, sin lieth at the door.* Which Words are a proverbial Expression, and will not admit of these several Acceptations.

*First*, By *sin lying at the door*, is meant; that *Sin*, how closely soever acted, shall be made manifest; and tho' a Man should act his Wickedness behind the Curtain, or in some place considerably remote

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from the Eyes of Men ; yet God *seeth in secret* ; and tho' no Mouths be open to discover the horridness of *Cain's guilt*, yet the *blood of Abel* shall cry from the ground unto God for Vengeance: As if God had spoke more plainly thus ; go too now, and exercise thy cruel Rage against thy innocent Brother ; act it with all the privacy of Thought, and flatter thy self with the apprehension, that it shall never be discovered ; yet be assur'd, that *mine eye will see thee*, and that *thine own iniquity will find thee out*. That thou canst no more secure thy Sin from my sight, than thou canst hide that which lies publickly at thy door, from the eye of those who are constant Passengers in the Street.

Secondly, *sin lieth at the door*, i.e. Altho' thou mayest for some time, through secular Diversions, or worldly Business, seem regardless of the bloody

bloody Crime, and hush the Conscience into a quiet Security, altho' thou couldst conceal thy Wickedness from each mortal Eye, and act it in the dark Retirement of the Cloyster; yet thou hast an Evidence, a Witness within thee, from which thou canst not hide thine Iniquity, but it shall be ever and anon testifying against thee, and reproaching thee for it. Or,

Thirdly, *sin lieth at the door*, that is, the punishment of thy Sin shall be ready at hand to seize thee, and will upon all opportunities croud it self in upon thee, like an Officer, that lies in wait to Arrest thee, or a Thief to break in upon thee. Or,

Fourthly, *sin lieth at the door*, i. e. Altho' for a while God should seem as tho' he had not seen thy Ways, and Conscience should sleep, and Judgment should not be Executed upon thee in this Life; yet

in the next World, Sin like a churlish Dog, will awake at the sound of the last Trump, and haunt and pursue thee to the Seat of God's avenging Tribunal. These are the several Interpretations which these Words will admit of, all which distinctly consider'd do denote unto us.

*First*, The Omniscience and Omnipresence of God.

*Secondly*, The Testimony of Conscience.

*Thirdly*, The Punishment of Sin in this World; or if not in this,

*Fourthly*, In the World to come.

Of each of which, I shall somewhat enlarge a little, and as I go along, shall make some few Observations, by way of Practice, and shall conclude with a Recapitulation of the whole.

*First*, *sin lieth at the door.* i. e. Sin, how closely soever acted, shall be

be made manifest, &c. shall be clear and open *before the eyes of him with whom we have to do*; just as things which lie publickly at the Door, are visible to those who are constant Passengers in the Street.

The *holy Prophet David*, who was most thorowly Inspir'd with the Knowledge of the Almighty; gives us so large an account of the Omniscience and Omnipresence of God, as denotes the Immensity of his Being, and his full Intuition into all Things and Places at once. *Pf. 139. 7. &c. Whether shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there; if I take wings of the morning, and dwell in the utmost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say the darkness shall cover me, then the night shall be light about me; yea, the darkness hideth*

deth not from thee, but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. i. e. 'Tis not possible for me, or any Mortal to escape the reach of thy most penetrating Eye, to secure our selves from thy All-seeing Presence; neither could an ascent to Heaven, nor a descent to the State of the Dead, nor a flight to the most distant Regions, stands us in any stead towards the concealing us from thy sight, the darkeſt Night, the cloſeſt and moſt artificial Recess, the ſubtleſt Diſguiſes are all naked and bare and diſcernable before thee, and as much ſo, as any the moſt ſcandalous Sins which are committed before the Sun, or on the Houſe-top, *for thou haſt poſſeſſed my reins*, v. 13. my very Affections and Inclinations, the original Bents and Proneneſs of my Nature, are within thy reach. And Equivalent to this  
God

God by the Voice of the Prophet *Jeremiah*, does thus speak of himself, *Ch. 23. 25. Am I a God at hand, and not a God afar off? Can any man hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?* So that let our Wickedness be never so closely carried, let our Sins be acted in never so close a Retirement, we may be assur'd that God is a Spectator, and stands by and sees the whole Scene of our Impiety. Nay, the Holy *Apostle, St. Luke*, in *Acts 17. 27.* tells us, that *God is not far from every one of us, but that men might feel after him, and find him*, the Original is *Ἐνλαλήσαντες αὐ- τὸν*, intimating, that God was so sensibly present to every Man, that tho' our Sins had so far benighted our Reason, that we were in dark, in gross Ignorance; yet was God so palpably to be discern'd, that by

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feeling or groping, as blind Men in that dark Heathenish Estate; were there no Gospel, no Revelation, nor any other Light than that of Nature; yet *that* were sufficient to evince that we could not go from the presence of God, or do any thing but what was visible to his All-seeing eye; for as one of the Heathen Writers has it Ζῶμεν δὲ ἐν αὐτῷ θνήσκωμεθα καὶ ἐσμεν, *in him we live these mortal lives, and move and are;* or as the Apostle expresses it, *in him we live and move and have our being.* Thus 'tis evident, from the Writings, both of the *Old* and *New Testament*, and by the concurrent Testimony of the *Heathens* themselves; that God is the great καρδιαγνώστης, the searcher of all Hearts, and is continually with and amongst us all. And now, since this is so; to what purpose do we hug ourselves with the apprehension of ha-  
ving

ving acted our Sins in a Corner? Or where will be the advantage of it, of being Wicked only in our Chamber, or our Closet? *God searcheth Hierusalem, as with candles,* and tho' we act our Sin at Midnight, yet *the darkness is no darkness with him,* the day and the night are both alike. What tho' our deep laid Contrivances may seem inscrutable, and our subtle management of the Affairs past Men's fathom; the All-piercing Eye of Heaven dives into the one, and can with ease display the Cunningness of the other. For how has the deep Hypocrisie of some been discover'd, and the subtle Recesses of the sly Sinner been made manifest? With what a fair pretence was *David's lascivious temper* carried on; and under what a specious Pretext was the *Murder of Naboth* colour'd? And yet how suddenly did God make the former pass

pass Sentence upon himself; and in how short a time did the Blood of the latter bring Vengeance upon those close Actors of Iniquity? And indeed should we enquire farther into the days of old, and into the Years of Ancient Times; should we consult all modern Story, and take a view of latter Transactions; what accountable Discoveries should we find of *wickedness acted in secret places*; and how should we see the Finger of God pointing out *his wisdom and knowledge above all things*? What signifies therefore our demure looks, or our lift up Hands, our *long Prayers*, or our *large Phylacteries*, *if our hands have been privately full of blood*, and *our ways, the ways of wickedness*? Stand in awe therefore, and *sin not*, but be as much afraid of guilt in thy Closet, as in the Market-place? *i. e.* Do nothing but what thou wouldst not be ashamed to  
to

to do, if God and Men were before thee, nor ever act that alone, which thou wouldst not be willing should be brought to light. God can easily discover the *hidden works of darkness* to all the World; and tho' for a while thou mayst cloak over Iniquity, yet his Eyes are not blind, that he cannot see; for thy *sin lieth at the door*, and is fully manifest in his sight, and so is it.

*Secondly*, To thine own Conscience.

This is a *domestick God*, a Being thou canst no more fly from, than thou canst fly from thy self. 'Tis an homebred Witness which bears thee company in all thy Dealings, and records thy guilt and shame in most indelible Characters. 'Twas the opinion of one of the *Rabbins*, that *Cain's mark* was *Abel's dog*, continually haunting and pursuing of him;

him; but be that so or not, 'tis certain, he had that within him which would be perpetually barking at him, or if he might sometimes hush it asleep, yet it lay continually at the Door of his Heart, and would ever and anon remind him of that bloody Crime which he had acted upon his Brother. And it is not thus with every Son of *Adam*? Is not consciouſness of guilt the constant attendant of ſin? and fear and ſorrow the never-failing conſequent of it? For did we ever know any notorious Malefactor (unleſs his Heart was ſeared) but what carried the frequent gripes and ſtings on Conſcience about him, and was frequently a *Pashur* or *Magor-Miſſabib*, all over fear, and a terror to himſelf? Jer. 20. 4. Have we not frequently ſeen horror and diſtraction hang upon the brow of a guilty Perſon, and fear and dread overtake the Impious and Prophane?  
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Will not sin disanimate the greatest *Bravo*, and *Blasphemy*, and *Inhumanity*, dispirit the Courage of an Hero? How tedious are the days, and how melancholly are the nights which are interwoven with the ghastly Reflections of an affrighted Fancy; and how does a *Chil* fear, dis-mantle the greatest Courage of a daring Sinner, and sink his Bravery into a cold Sweat? Will not the heart, i. e. the conscience of a man change his countenance, whether it be good or evil, and the sense of having done ill, often display it self in Dread and Paleness? Will not a continual uneasiness possess the soul that sinneth, and Trembling and Anxiety be his meat day and night? We have the Condition of the Wicked elegantly describ'd by the Hand of *Moses*, Deut. 28. 65, 66, 67. *The Lord shall give thee a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and*  
for-



sorrow of mind. And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee, and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life. In the morning thou shalt say, would God it were even; and at even, thou shalt say, would God it were morning, for the fear of thine heart, wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see. This is the melancholly description, which the Prophet gives of the Punishment which shall attend a wicked and disobedient Person, and pursuant to this, I remember that *Philo Judæus*, gives us an account of one *Flaccus*, who having acted all the parts of a Savage Cruelty against the *Jews* for their Religion's sake, was within a very little while after so tormented with the Memory of his bloody Iniquities, that no Place, no Company, no Condition could secure him from the Lashes of his own Conscience.

science. For was he in Company? he was always watchful, least a Knife, a Pistol, or a Ponyard should take away his life, as he had done others. Was he alone? He was ever and anon starting and looking behind him, with the apprehension of some other [Assassinating of him? Was he eating, or drinking? He shook and trembled with the dread, that Poison was mixt with his Provisions? Was he an hungry? He fancyed that he should at last perish for want of Bread? Was he in the light? He was afraid of every Leaf that wagg'd, and endeavour'd to fly from it, and from himself? Was he in bed? The remembrance of his past Cruelty crowded into his Nightly Dreams, and fill'd him with the ghastly Appearances of those Persons, whose Souls he had sent into the next World? Thus did guilt and fear perpetually sting  
this

this wicked Wretch, and made him like another Cain, suspicious that every one that met him, would take away his life. And indeed, may we not say with the Poet, *Mutato Namine, de te dicatur*; change but the Name, and the Qualities are appropriated to every Sinner. For did every Man heartily enjoy himself, who had inhumanely Butcher'd his Brother, or his Friend? Or has not the Nightly Debauch, or the Noon-day Excess of the Intemperate, or Prophane made his Bed uneasy, and his Sleep unquiet? Do not the wages of unrighteousness, prove like gall in the stomach; and the wine of the drunkard like the poison of Dragons, and the cruel venome of Aspes? Deut. 32. 32. May it not properly be said, that men weary themselves, who commit iniquity; and that the Yoke of Transgression clogs the Mind with black and uncomfortable Remorse? And now

now, if these be the sad Effects of Sin and Wickedness; how much does it concern every one of us to *exercise our selves, to keep a conscience void of offence, both towards God, and towards man?* No Man that has any regard to his quiet, would chuse to live in an House that was perpetually haunted with ghastly Apparitions, or desire to have a frightful Fiend to be his constant Associate; and yet he does all this, and much worse, who gives himself up to the Tyranny of Vice, and the Slavery of Satan. For he by this, not only drowns his Soul in Perdition, and makes himself an Heir of Hell, but he anticipates his eternal Misery, and is as it were an Inhabitant of those dismal Regions, tho' he be yet *in the body*. For in what more does the Essence of Hell consist, than in the Terrors of a guilty Mind? And

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what is there that more nearly resembles the Company of the affrightful Fiends of that dark Abyſs, than a Conſcience full of remorse let looſe upon us? Would not this make our very Bed-chamber as uneaſie to us, as an Houſe that is haunted, and our Cloſet as full of Terror as the Cells of the Damned. As we value therefore our own eaſe, and would not have all our Enjoyments imbitter'd to us, as we expect comfort in our Retirement, and would not have any diſmal Apprehenſions lodge within our Curtains; let us avoid Sin, as we would an evil Spirit, and no more harbour the viperous brood of Iniquity, than we would a Serpent in our Boſom, or a Devil in our Manſions; for if Sin go before ſuch an Horror and Confuſion as this, will inevitably at one time or other follow after. Which leads me to enlarge

large upon the third Acceptation of this proverbial Expression in my Text.

*Sin lieth at the door*, i. e. The Punishment of thy Sin shall be ready at hand to seize thee, and will upon all Opportunities croud it self in upon thee, like an Officer, that lies in wait to Arrest thee, or a Thief to break in upon thee.

*Shall be ready at hand to seize thee*. For it oft so happens, that the Punishment of the Sin, does not immediately follow upon the neck of our committing of it, but sometimes God's *μακροθυια* his patience and long suffering permits Men, as the Prophet speaks, *to plough wickedness, and to reap iniquity*. Hof. 10. 13. i. e. to make a long progress in the Paths of Darknes; nay, sometimes the custom of Sinning, may thro' the just Judgment of God, take away the very sense of it; and Men



may go to Sin, as they would to a Meal, and rise from it as unconcern'dly: 'tis their meat and drink, and they cannot sleep unless they do evil. But yet, tho' God for a while may thus seem to keep silence, and appear as though he did not see, tho' Men's Hearts may for a while be wholly set to do evil, and custom of Sinning, may make Men's Consciences brawny and insensible; yet there are certain Seasons in this World, in which God usually sets their Sins before their Eyes, and makes the dire Reflections of Guilt overtake them, and the Remorse of Conscience like a Dog which lies watching at the Door, force in upon them and disturb them.

Now, these Seasons, I take to be chiefly these.

*First*, When Danger threatens. Or,

*Secondly*, When Affliction is actually upon them. Or,

*Thirdly*,

*Thirdly*, When Sickneſs ſeize them. Or,

*Fourthly*, When Death is in view.

Though Conſcience at other times may be eaſily lul'd aſleep, and the Sinners Thoughts be wrap'd up in a quiet Security; tho' he may enjoy his Mind and himſelf, and ſing a *requiem* to his polluted Soul; yet 'tis highly probable, that at ſuch Season as theſe, his guilty Thoughts will ſit uneaſie upon him, and his *ſins offer themſelves to his remembrance*. For, Firſt, When Danger threatens, and the Clouds begin to gather thick upon them, and portend ſome mighty Storm; when the Flood-gates of Sorrow ſeem ready to open, and the Waves Wabes rowle towards them with a diſmal noiſe; Men will be ſtartled into a conſideration of their paſt Lives, and bethink themſelves whether their *breast-plate of Righteouſneſs*

be a sufficient guard against those Assailants, and whether their Innocence can secure them against the Assaults of the Almighty.

All Men naturally flee to God in the Day of their Distress; and if his Wrath seem *kindled but a little*, begin to reflect whether *their hearts be right before him, or not*. Nay, even the profligate and profane; who in their Affluence and Prosperity, dare boldly deny the very Being of a God; yet when Distress and Danger threatens, and some rugged Fate hovers over them, they then fear that God they before flouted at, dread that Deity they just now scorn'd, and earnestly supplicate that Almighty Being, whose very Existence they deny'd heretofore. Agreeable to which, I remember a Witty Story in the Tragedies of *Æschiles*; where he tells us, that when the *Græcian* Forces so hotly pursu'd the *Persian* Host, that they constrain'd them to ven-

venture over the great and dangerous Water *Strymon*, whose Streams indeed was at that time chain'd up with Ice, but began to be dissolv'd and unfetter'd by the gentle Gales of *Zephirus*; and did thereby every minute threaten the *Fugitants* with a Watery Grave; you then might have seen, say's he, those daring Gallants, who had practis'd Villany, and profest Atheism from their Cradles; nay, who just before so boldly maintain'd, that there was *no God*, fallen now prostrate upon their Knees, and devoutly Praying that the Ice might hold till they got over. But we need not have gone to a Prophane Story, for such an Instance as this. Proud *Pharaoh*, who in the Sun-shine of Fortune, and when a prosperous Gale fann'd all his Proceedings cold, boldly cry out *who is the Lord*; who scorn'd the Checks of the Almighty, and

would not the *reproof* of Heaven; yet when the cloudy brow of Providence began to distort it self, and the Thunder of the Almighty roar'd terribly in his Ears; the dread of his Danger awakes his *Conscience*, which will not suffer him to be at ease, but compells him much against his Inclinations, to *send for Moses and Aaron in haste*, to deprecate the impendent Ruine, and thereby allay his guilty Fears.

And indeed it is not to be expected, but that every Wicked Man will be almost continually so haunted with an Ill-aboding Mind, as that he will flee before the Spectres of his own Fancy, for he has all the Moral Causes of Fear within his own Breast, and is perpetually agitated with his own restless Thoughts, which upon every Alarm of Danger from without, will presently raise a Tumult within, and  
put

put the whole Soul into an Up-  
roar, and when the *terrors of God*  
*set themselves in array against him*;  
tis greatly probable, that the Re-  
proaches of his *Conscience* will do  
so too. But then,

*Secondly*, If Impendent Danger does  
not startle the Sinner into Anxi-  
ous Fears, nor the approaching Ter-  
rors of the Almighty, make him *call*  
*his sins to remembrance*; yet when the  
Hand of God is really upon him,  
and the *arrows of the Almighty stick*  
*fast in him*; when Affliction has  
really overtaken him, and *the night*  
*of his pleasure is turned into sorrow*,  
his Sin will then appear naked be-  
fore him, and his *Conscience* will give  
him severe Items of his Iniquity,  
especially if (as it often proves) his  
Affliction, bear any resemblance with  
his Crime, and he can trace the  
Foot-steps of his Iniquity by the  
Punishment of it. We find, that  
when



when *Adonibezek* was made *Captive*, and had *his fingers and his great toes cut off*, and was put to feed under the table of one of the *Kings of Judah*; his Affliction brings his Inhumane Cruelty to remembrance, and makes him in the Agony of Conscience cry out threescore and ten *Kings having their thumbs and their great toes cut off*, gathered their meat under my table; as I have done, so God hath requited me. *Judg.* 1. 7. And the sons of *Jacob* had quite forgotten their unnatural Behaviour towards their Innocent Brother, and their Prosperity had made them outgrow the Memory of it; but no sooner was the Hand of God upon them, but they begin to reflect upon the Occasion of that Visitation, and they immediately resolve it into their Barbarous Carriage towards that Innocent Strippling, and they said one to another, we are verily guilty concerning our brother,  
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in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear, therefore is this distress come upon us. Gen. 42. 21.

But then, *Thirdly*, If our Hearts be so Brawny and Callous, or our Natural Bravery so great as not to be dismay'd, either with Dangers that threaten, or present Afflictions which have already seized us; yet when Sickness comes upon us like an *Armed Man*, and wearisome nights are appointed to us, when we are chastised with pain upon our bed, and are full of tossings unto the dawning of the day; in a word, when the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint, at such a time as this, our Guilt will stare us in the Face, and we shall surely possess the sins of our youth. There are some Distempers Incident to the Body, which grievously depress the Mind of a very good Man; and when the Animal  
Spirits

Spirits are obscure and cloudy throw a thick Fæculent Intemperature of the Blood (occasioned, as some Physitians tell us, throw a Vicious Acid) represent the Images of things shady and dark, and causes every Thought to be Black and Melancholly, and is oft-times ready to rush the poor Patients into Despair, and occasions them to lay Violent Hands upon themselves, or others. A sad Melancholly Condition indeed, and requires not only our great Pity and Commiseration and Prayers, but ought to make us judge very Charitably of those who suffer under such an immoderate and unhappy Crasis. And now, if the *Aduſtneſs* of the *Blood* do thus sadly Operate upon the whole Man; what dismal Effects may we suppose will a *Mind* depressed with the Apprehensions of Eternal *Horror* have upon the Sinner, when the Indisposition

sition of his Body shall concur with the Depravity of his Mind, and Wickedness, and Impiety, have vitiated his Morals, as much as an undue *Crafs* has his Naturals. What a Melancholly Representations of things must this occasion? And how will the Day be obscur'd with gloomy Thoughts, and how tedious will be the shades of the Night, through black Reflections? How will *Conscience*, more especially at such a time as this awake with him, and Guilt like a Watchful Centinel, be ever and anon knocking at the *Door* of his Heart; and as his Sickness increases, makes his Fears enlarge. But then,

*Fourthly*, If this Life seem to draw nigh unto the Grave, and he have the sentence of death in himself; 'tis ten thousand to one but *Conscience* will then be Loud and Clamorous, and be just ready to open the Books  
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of Account before him. There are very few Sinners, who can like *Jonah*, sleep in a storm, and hush their Guilty Fears into Silence, when Danger, Affliction, or Sicknes is upon them; but suppose all this, suppose the Man to the utmost of his Power, to have stifled all the Sentiments of Reason, and by a continued habit of Vice, to have seared his Conscience, as with an hot Iron, or by a perpetual hurry of Business, or Debauchery, to have given himself no time to Reflect, or when his Melancholly Thoughts were upon him, to have *chased away that evil spirit*, by Wine, or Musick; yet when the sad Approaches of the dark Grave threaten him, and his Sins and Pleasures begin to die; when he has no relish from those luscious Entertainments of Sense, in which he so fully bath'd himself here-

heretofore, nor sees any thing but a gloomy Night of Death, and a dreadful Judgment before him, and finds that he is just ready to be wrapt in the cold Embraces of the Grave; what amazing Scenes of Astonishment will then seize him, and how will his Fears and Sorrows multiply upon him, and like an awakened Dog, vex and terrify him with it's perpetual Barking? All his Sins will then stand in Array before him, and Paint his Fancy with the blackest Images of Terror, and will not suffer any Comfort to Interpose, or any Refreshment to take place in his Wearied Soul. For indeed, what is there that can add any Quiet or Satisfaction to him, who stands Self-condemn'd, and has Guilt continually gnawing in his own Breast? What Balm, but that of *Gilead*, can Cure the Wounds of *Conscience*;



ence, or what Pleasures can divert that Man, whose Mind is all over Ulcerated and sore Vexed? Call now together, O Sinner! all thy Jocund Companions, desire them to come and revel before thee, let them repeat all the Mad and Jovial Frolicks, in which thou hast been so much delighted; Summons all thy Dalliances to thy remembrance, or let thy Ill-gotten Gold be brought before thee, that thou mayst admire thy dear *Mammon*, and *glory in the multitude of thy Riches*, and see if any, if all these things will make thy Bed more soft, or thy Mind more at ease; try if these will divert thy Melancholly, or thy Frenzy, or still the impetuous noise of thy Guilty Conscience, no; Reason will then be heard, it will then appear in it's full Vigour, and Lacerate and Torment thee for all those Affronts which thou didst formerly

merly put upon it ; It will stir up the bitter Remembrance of thy past Sins, and will be perpetually oppressing thee with frightful Horrors and Agonies of Mind, till it has conducted thee to the Tribunal of God. And therefore, if we would not have our Spirits Incapacitated to confront the greatest Dangers, to grapple with the heaviest Afflictions, to comfort us in the time of Sickness, and support us in the Hour of Death ; let us *keep innocency, and take heed to the thing that is right* ; for these are the peculiar Seasons in which we shall stand in the greatest need of inward Comfort and Support ; and yet in which, if we have in any considerable measure Violated our Conscience ; 'tis highly probable it will be greatly raging and afflictive to us.

But then, *Lastly*, Suppose we yet farther, that the Sinner should have *no pangs in his death, nor be plagued*

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like other Men, but that Success and Pleasure should Crown all his Actions, and that thorow the whole Stage of his Life, each day should produce fresh Blessings to him ; suppose him amidst all his Affluence, to go slowly and peaceably to his Grave, and meet with nothing, either before, or in his last Hour to disturb his Quiet ; yet what will all this avail him ? for חטא לכתוב *sin lies at the door*, and like a Churchish Dog, will awake at the last Trump, and haunt and pursue the Sinner to the Seat of God's Aven-  
ging Tribunal ; will like an Angry Cur, dog him at the heels, even to the Seat of Judgment, and bark out bitter Invectives against him, if not in this, yet however in the next World. 'Tis Story'd of a certain *Emperour* ; that being told of the Death of a Person, who had past over the whole Scene of his Life in  
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the height of Wickedness and Impiety, and had wholly devoted himself to Sensuality, Cruelty, and Prophaneness; and yet Died full of Age, with Peace without, and a seeming serenity within; the Wise Emperor Smote his Breast, and said, surely there are Rewards and Punishments in the next World. And indeed, 'tis almost impossible to solve the Difficulties of Providence, and the Diversity of God's Dispensations in this World; were we not convinc'd that *God would bring every work into judgment, and give to every man according to what he had done in the flesh, whether it be good, or whether it be bad.* Now the Principal Evidence which shall be brought there, either to Acquit, or Condemn us, shall be the Register of our *Conscience*, if that Proclaim us Innocent, or Repentant; 'tis the same with that; *well done thou good and faithful*

*servant.* But if it declare us Guilty, 'tis like a thousand Witnesses against us, and shall be as Astonishing and Dreadful to us, as tho' we heard that Voice of, *go ye cursed into everlasting burnings, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* For it will there set all our Sins in order before us, remind us of the Time, the Place, and all the Aggravating Circumstances belonging to them, Reproach us for not listning to it's Dictates, and assure us, that tho' it seem'd to sleep, whilst we were busily and closely Acting our Brutish and Carnal Sins, yet it was broad awake, and was all the while behind the Curtain with us; that whilst we thought that all our Avenues were private, and unknown, it lay at the Door, and our going forth, and our coming in, were always visible and naked before it, and that it was our constant Companion unto Death, and fol-

follow'd us closely by the heels to that dreadful Bar. This is the certain Testimony which Conscience will give against us at the great Day of Account.

To sum up all therefore, can we Act nothing but what is perfectly visible to the All-seeing Eye of Heaven? Then let us lay aside all our Foolish Hypocrisie, and do nothing but what we should be willing to do, if God were in some visible Schechinah amongst us, let us set him always before us, and be as fearful to offend, as we should be in the Presence of that Almighty Being. Let us lay aside all that Varnish, with which we smooth over our Actions, and possess our Minds with a due Apprehension of his continual Presence, and be as much afraid to Sin, when alone, or in the dark, as we would be in the open Sun, or on the House-top,



and let us not say, I am now retir'd and have a secret opportunity of acting such or such a Sin, but let us check our wanton Sallies, and our intemperate heat with a God *seeth, he seeth me, tho' in Secret; for nothing can be hid from his sight.*

Again, *Secondly*, Have we a Witness continually Registering all our Actions? Is our *Conscience*, our continual Associate and Companion; then let us not ruffle and discompose it by our irregular Courses; let us not provoke it by our Wicked and Debauched Practices, to tear and gnaw and torment us, but let us be as fearful to offend, tho' in private, as we would be, had we our greatest Enemies at our Elbow, who we know watch for our halting; let us have as careful an Eye over all our Proceedings, as we should were we in the Face of Ten Thousand Witnesses, and let us cherish and keep

keep our *Conscience* pleas'd, as we would an Angry *Cur*, which we know would upon the least Provocation tear us in pieces.

Again, *Thirdly*, Will our Guilty Fears more especially enlarge themselves, when we are in Danger, or Affliction, and when we lie upon our Bed of Sickness, or are just about to Die? Let us consider, what great need of support we shall more especially have at such times as these, and that 'tis greatly difficult for the most Innocent Person to make a Conquest over that Sorrow, and those Troubles which will ever and anon be ready to overwhelm him; and therefore, let us Wisely lay up such Spiritual Provisions in our Health and Prosperity, as may enable us to grapple with the *difficulties of life*, and the *agonies of death*; and to this end, let us really fancy our selves to be in some pressing Danger, or labouring under some

heavy Affliction, or Languishing upon a Sick-bed, or just entring upon the Confines of the Grave; let us imagine that our *day of gladness*, is just going to be *turn'd into a day of darkness, and of gloominess, and a day of clouds, and of thick darkness*, or that we are now *feeding upon the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction*; let us fancy that we are now *chastned with pain upon our bed*, and that we see our Weeping Friends sit by us, taking a sad and solemn leave of us, and a Clammy Sweat Sealing of us to our long Home, and just such Resolutions, as we think we should really make in such doleful Circumstances as these, let us now make, and live up to, whilst we are free from Danger and Affliction, Sicknes, and the Pangs of Death; and let us all be what we shall all wish to be when we come to Die, or appear at the Seat of Judgment.

ment. And to this purpose, let us all of us often and seriously consider, what a Melancholy Scene all our Sinful Pleasures, or Profits will present us withall, when any such Circumstances as these befall us; how we shall Curse the Tempter and our selves, and with what hatred and scorn we shall look upon all those gilded Vanities, which then redouble our Sorrows. There must be either *Innocence*, or *Repentance*, to Entitle us to Pardon, and Peace of *Conscience*; and therefore, if we have forfeited the one, let us with all possible speed repair the Guilt of our Minds by the other. God is not inexorable; *he sent his Son Christ Jesus into the world for no other purpose, but to seek, to save the lost sheep of Israel*, and he hath all along told us; that *at what time soever, a sinner turneth from his wickedness which he hath committed, and doth that which*  
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is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive; and that he willeth that all men should be saved; and therefore, let our Sins have been never so great, let the Agonies of our Mind be never so violent, we are still in the *land of the living*, and in a possibility yet of being Eternally Happy; and tho' our *iniquities have separated between us and our God*, and Despairing Thoughts, may in Danger, in Affliction, in Sickness, or on a Death-bed, grievously haunt and vex us; the ever blessed Son of God, is able and willing to save us, if we will but come unto him that we may have life. And if we do but still fix such Resolutions as these, and do our endeavour towards the Performance of them, we shall find his grace sufficient to allay the Torments of our guilty Consciences; but if we resolve to go wilfully on in our Sins, and will not endeavour by a  
Sin

Sincere Repentance to appease the heavy Wrath of God, and thereby conceal the Evidence and Conviction of Conscience which lies against us, tho' God for a while may seem not to see, and our Conscience may appear blindfold, and not reprove us, and Judgment may not be Executed upon us in this World, yet at the Day of Retribution we shall be Summons'd to the Bar of God's Judgment-seat, and there God will reprove us, Conscience will bear Witness against us, and our Sins shall seize and overtake us, and we shall be consign'd to have our Portion in the Everlasting Chains of Darkness, *prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* From which Dismal Estate, God of his Mercy, deliver us all, &c.

PSA.



## P S A L M XCIV. IX. X.

*He that planted the ear, shall he not  
hear? He that formed the eye, shall  
he not see?*

*He that chastiseth the Heathen, shall  
not he correct? He that teacheth  
man knowledge, shall he not know?*

**H**E that soberly sits down and  
considers the great Variety  
of Created Beings, cannot but be  
struck into an high Admiration of  
that All-wise God, who hath in so  
Curious and Regular a Manner,  
order'd and dispos'd of things about  
him. To see every thing rank'd in  
a due and proper Class, and nothing  
deviate from the proposed Laws of  
Nature, to behold how things are  
one subservient to the other, and  
tho'

tho' they have distinct Beings, yet are dependant upon one another, is a Consideration as well becoming the Reason of a *Philosopher*, as the Thought of a *Christian*. But then if we ascend one degree higher, and consider Man, as he is in himself, a Rational and Thinking Creature, who can by Theory and Speculation, Contemplate the great Perfections of his Maker, and Eye the Providence of God, in the Wise Position of all things here below; 'twill raise our Admiration into Extasie, and make us cry out with the Holy *Psalmist*, *Lord, what is man, that thou art thus mindful of him, and beneficial to him.* But yet, tho' God has been pleas'd to be so Graciously Liberal to the Sons of Men, as to invest them with Reason, and Sublime Intellectual Faculties, and to endue them with a Knowledge of himself, and thereby make them Wise unto Salvation;  
yet

yet his Greatness is unsearchable, and his Understanding beyond our Fathom, and we cannot *by searching find out God* ; we cannot *find out the Almighty to perfection*, but must like Moles, grope in the dark, and be content to be unwillingly silent, because part of his Essence is beyond our sublimest Speculation ; and *great things doth he which we cannot comprehend.* Job 37. 8. But then, altho' God be great, and we know him not ; Job 36. 26. yet we may in legible Characters, trace the Foot-steps of the Almighty ; and Natural Reason will Dictate to us the greatest part of his Attributes, as well as his Being. For the very Name of God bespeaks him to be absolutely Perfect, and we cannot think upon him as *Creator* of Mankind, but we must at the same time conclude him, not only to have all the Excellencies of the Creature, but to have them in the

the greatest height and perfection; and therefore, were it *possible* to consider *God* as less *perfect* than his own Workmanship, the thought it self would appear mighty absurd, and carry its own Confutation along with it. *For he that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see?* i. e. 'Tis preposterous, that *that great Architect* of the whole Universe; who built Man with those Faculties and Perfections about him, who not only *breathed into him the breath of life*, but gave him a Rational Soul, and for entertaining of him with Delightful Converse, or Melodious or Grateful Sounds, qualified him with the Organs of Hearing; and to move him on one hand, to the Admiration of the Handy-work of God, and on the other, to solace himself with the Delightful Objects of this lower Orb, added the Happiness of Sight, as well

well as Knowledge ; who not only fix'd the lower Springs of Motion, but added the Wings of Delight and Pleasure, of Knowing Faculties, as well as Sensation. 'Tis beyond the reach of Thought to believe that such a mighty Being as this should be so greatly defective in himself, as neither to hear, nor see, nor understand what was in the Mouth, the Thoughts, the Capacities of Man, *for he that planted the ear, shall he not hear ? He that formed the eye, shall he not see ?* To which the *Psalmist* subjoins as a necessary consequence. *He that chastiseth the Heathen, shall not be correct ? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know ? i. e.* And if he do so, if he be that Intelligent Being, which his Name bespeaks him, it cannot but unavoidably follow, that having taken such great care to make known his Will to the Sons of Men, having plainly re-

revealed his good pleasure to the Workmanship of his own Hands, he will expect that they should run the way of his Commandments; and if they do not, so will not fail to punish their Failure and Negligence of it. So that in these Words are contain'd.

*First*, The Omniscience and Omnipresence of our Maker.

*Secondly*, The Effect of those his Attributes, or what must necessarily be the Result of those his Perfections, viz. That as a Return of his Bounty, in conferring those excellent Endowments of Knowledge and Understanding upon the Sons of Men. He,

*First* Expects, that we answer the great Ends of Creation. And,

*Secondly*, That if we do not so, he (who cannot but see all our Actions and Misdeeds) will Correct us for our Miscarriage, and Chastise us for our Iniquities.

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In discoursing of which Words, I shall insist upon the Proof of these two Things.

*First*, That God sees, and knows all our Ways.

*Secondly*, That he will Chastise and Punish us for all our Miscalriages.

*First*, That God sees and knows all our Ways. *He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see?*

God Almighty is Wittily Represented by the Hieroglyphick Writers, by the Sculpture of an Eye, standing upon the top of a Staff, the Staff being an Emblem of his Power and Scepter, and the Eye an Express of his *All-searching Knowledge*, and the *ὅλος ὅλον τι* of the Schoolmen, describes him to be a Being Essentially, and Effectually present in all Places at once; that *he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath;*

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Josh. 2. 11. and that all things are naked and open before him; that if we ascend up into heaven, God is there; if we descend into the lowermost parts of the earth, he is there also; if we say the darkness shall cover us, the darkness hideth not from him; but the night shineth as the day. i. e. 'Tis not possible to escape the reach of God's most Penetrating Eye, to secure our selves from his All-seeing Presence. The darkest Night, the closest and most Artificial Recess; the Subtlest Disguises and Hypocrisies, are all naked and bare before him; nothing can bolt his Knowledge from our most retired Thoughts, but our most secret Contrivances are as manifest to him, as our most Open and Scandalous Sins, which are committed in the Face of the Sun, or Proclaim'd aloud upon the House-top. He is a God at hand, and a God afar off; nor can'st thou hide thy self in secret, that he  
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shall not see thee. Jer. 23. 23. 24.  
 But this indeed is a Truth so universally own'd, that we need not have Recourse to Holy Writ for the Evincement of it; for even the *Heathens* themselves, who had nothing but the dim Light of Nature to direct them, readily acknowledged, that God was an Intellectual Sphere, whose Centure was every where, but his *περίφερος* his Circumference no where. And altho' they Painted their Demiurgus as a Being retir'd within a Cave; yet they did not signifie by that, that he was comprehended, but that the Perfections of the Divine Nature were too vast, too deep, too mysterious for Humane Minds to search out; they always own'd, that his Power, his Knowledge, and his Essence was Infinite and Immense, and that as his *doings* were *incomprehensible*, and his *ways* *past finding out*, so his Presence

sence was Unlimited, and his Understanding Infinite. That he was in all Places at once, and that the vast Universe was too narrow to contain that Mighty Being. But then,

*Secondly*, As God thus knows all the Ways of the Sons of Men; so if he sees that we deviate from those Wholsome Precepts, which he has enjoyned us, he will Chastise and Punish us for our Miscarriages.

To acknowledge that God thoroughly sees, and understands the Hearts of the Children of Men, and yet not to believe that he will Punish their Failures, is a greater Sin than to disbelieve his Essence, or his Power; for 'tis not so great an Affront to the *Almighty Being*, to say, that he is not at all, as to aver that he is *unjust in all his ways, and unrighteous in all his works*. That he hath given Laws to the Sons of Men, and

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hath enforc'd them with the strong Sanctions of Rewards and Punishments, and yet shall wink at the Breach of them ; or sit down unconcern'd, as tho' the *Almighty* did not see, as tho' the *God of Jacob* did not consider. 'Tis to bring his Truth, as well as his Justice into Question, and make him as man, that he should lie, or as the son of man, that he should deceive ; 'tis to bespeak him such an one as our selves, and to declare to the World, that he is not a God hating iniquity, transgression and sin. And God indeed seems so mighty jealous of his Honour in this point ; that there is no part of Holy Scripture so express as that, wherein he signifies his Displeasure against Sin ; and that he will certainly punish the Breach of his Commandments. If thou do at all forget the Lord thy God, and walk after other Gods and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you  
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this day, that you shall surely perish, &c. Deut. 8. 19. Thus, again, 1 Kings 9. 66, 8. If you shalt at all turn from following of me, you, or your children, and will not keep my commandments, &c. then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword. To which, I might add innumerable places which tell us that God, who is the God of truth, and without iniquity, who is just in all his ways, and righteous in all his judgments, will give to every man according to his works, and reward every person according to the fruit of his doings, will correct and chastise the Sinful Sons of Adam, and cause the wickedness of the wicked to be upon him. But these Truths being so fully embrac'd by all that call themselves Christians. I shall rather than spend any farther time in the proof of them, proceed to that which I principal-



ly aim at in this Discourse ; and that is to raise such Practical Inference from what has been said, as may tend to the Reformation of our Lives, and the Salvation of our Souls. And therein,

*First*, Does God see and know all our Ways. This should teach us to avoid all Hypocrisie and Deceit, to lay aside all Fallacy and Guile.

'Tis possible, Men may be so far wrought upon by specious Pretences, as not to discern the false Disguise, which lies varnish'd with so much Fucus. But *God knows our very thoughts afar off*, and stands by and sees all our Guilded Designs ; he *knows the thoughts of men when they are vain, and the imaginations of the heart, whether they be sincere or not*. For art thou in thy Closet at thy Private Devotions, lo, there is not a Word in thy Tongue, but the Lord

Lord knoweth it altogether; he thorowly reads the things which *come into thy mind, every one of them.* He understands whether thy Prayers be sincere or no, or whether thou *askest to spend upon thy lusts.* He knows whether thy Devotions be yawning and remiss, or whether fill'd with Ardent Zeal, and a Fervency of Spirit,

Art thou at Church, or at the Sacrament, God stands by and sees thy Carriage; he Reads thy Heart, whether Hypocrisie, or Self-ends brought thee thither, or whether a desire after the True Bread of Life Wing'd thy Zeal, and made thee fly to this Altar.

Art thou Buying, or Selling, Merchandizing, or Trafficking, *the eyes of the Almighty are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings, he spies out all thy Collusive Tricks, and Deceitful Methods,* knows to an  
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Hairs breadth, the Justness of thy Measure, and to the Dust upon the Weights, the Equity of thy Ballance. In short, *the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the good and the bad; he searcheth all Hearts, and understandeth all the Imaginations of thy Thoughts; hell and destruction are naked before him; how much more than the hearts of the children of men.* And therefore, with how much reason may God Expostulate with us, in the Words of *Abasuerus*, concerning *Haman*; *will he force the Queen before me? Wilt thou be Drunk, or Unclean? Wilt thou Cheat or Defraud, Swear, Curse, Lie, or Blaspheme, even before my Face? Wilt thou be Guilty of the greatest Debauchery in my Presence; and Break and Violate my Sacred Laws, and abuse my Holy Name, whilst I am in Company? If nothing else will be a Re-*  
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mora to stop the Procedure of thy Wickedness; yet methinks the Consideration that 'tis done in the Presence of Me thy Maker, of Me, who when provoked, am a consuming fire, should stop thy Career, and blast thy Vicious Intentions.

Secondly, Does God Eye all our Performances? What greater Encouragment can we possibly have to stir us up to those Duties which are enjoyn'd us? 'Tis he, who was our Legislator, that is to be our Judge, and who is a constant Spectator of all our Endeavours; he hath promised to reward all those who diligently seek him, and thorowly knows whether we seek him or not, and therefore, when he sees how Laboriously Industrious we are in the doing of those things which he commanded us, when he observes how solicitous we are to withstand the Snares of the World, the Flesh and the

the Devil, he will not suffer us to be tempted beyond our strength, but will with the temptation make a way for us to escape. What inward Comfort must that Man needs enjoy, who has God always standing by him to commend his Doings; and what a mighty pleasure will his Conscience afford him, who as it were hears a joyful *Euge* every minute, sounding out to him. Can any Weariness, any Fatigue attend that Person, who has an Omnipotent Arm to Help, and an Almighty Power to strengthen and support him? Or can any thing discourage that Man from his Duty, who has an All-wise God to commend and applaud the Sincere, tho' weak Endeavours of his own Workmanship? Difficulties by the mere strength of Natural Power, are oft-times insuperable; and for that reason Men oft sit down under a sullen and forlorn Despondency; but

but when I am convinc'd that God's strength shall be made known in my weakness, and that his grace shall be sufficient for me, nothing but the height of Folly, or the depth of Madnes, can prevent me from Attacking that Fort, which I am sure to Conquer; nothing can discourage me from Encountring that Temptation, which I am sure to overcome.

Thirdly, Does God know all our Ways, nay, even the Private Re-cesses of our Thoughts? This should strike us into an Awful Dread of his Divine Presence, and cause us to set a Guard, even upon the most inward Sentiments of our Minds. There is none of us that can say with *Jacob*; surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not; Gen. 28. 16. for whether we sleep or wake, we every minute find the Effects of his Presence, and perpetually experience, that of a truth he is with us,  
and



and amongst us; and therefore, with what an Awful Regard ought we to demean our selves? Wer't thou certain that thy Father, or thy Friend, that thy Antagonist, or thine Enemy, thorowly understood all thy Actions, and were able to dive in to thy most retired Thoughts; would it not stave thee off from the Commission of many of those Sins, upon which thou now adventurest? Nay, were but a Child; or a Fool in Company, wouldst thou even in their sight accomplish thy Lustful *Amours*, or gratifie thy Bestial Appetite? Why, consider, that tho' none of these be Spectators of that Mad Scene of Wickedness, yet thou art in the Dreadful Presence of *Almighty God*, tho' thou beest in the dark; and that the most Hypocritical Contrivances, tho' carried on with never so much Secresie, cannot be hid from his sight.

sight. Stand in awe, therefore, and sin not; commune in your own hearts, and in your chamber, and be still, know that the eyes of the Lord are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings; he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him; he sees and understands the things which come into thy mind, every one of them; and there is not a word in thy tongue, but he knoweth it altogether; hell and destruction are before the Lord; how much more than the hearts of the children of men?

But, then, *Fourthly*, Will this All-seeing God chastise and punish us for all our Miscarriages. This ought to make us Solicitously Careful that we offend not so Mighty a Benefactor; he hath given unto us, Life, and Breath, and all that we enjoy; hath invested us with Reason, and Sublime Intellectual Faculties; hath given us Ears to hear

hear his Voice, and a Mouth to shew forth his Praise; how highly therefore doth it become us to use those Instruments to his Glory, and employ those Faculties in his Service? God made nothing in vain, and to no purpose; and therefore, since he hath given us Eyes to See and *understand the wonderful works of the Lord*; 'tis doubtless our Duty to *praise him with joyful lips, and to sing forth his loving kindness from generation to generation*. Since he in Mercy hath given us the Organs of Hearing; 'tis our Duty to take delight in Approaching his Sanctuary, that we may *hear his word, understand his will, and do his pleasure*. Our Ears were not given us that they might be open to Prophane Discourse; nor our Eyes allotted us, that they might be *set upon vanity*; but the Design of God in these gracious Vouchsafements, was his own Glory, and  
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our Salvation ; and therefore, if we fail in answering those great Ends, he will *make bare his arm*, and vindicate his Honour in our Confusion ; he will *chastise us at first with the rod of man*, and if by such gentle Methods, he cannot bring us to himself, he will *magnifie his justice in our confusion*. Let us therefore, make it our great Care and Business to answer those Ends, for which we were sent into the World ; and let us not misemploy those *Talents* which were so freely entrusted with us ; but let all our Faculties be wholly Devoted to the Service of our Maker, and let his Glory be the Summ Total of all our Wishes ; for unless we do this, and do it in Sincerity and Truth, he who sees us under that false Disguise, shall punish our Ingratitude, as well as Folly, and our being now Wiser than our Fellow Creatures, shall but inhaunce our Reckoning

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at that Great Day of Account. Upon which Consideration, what has been said, may move us.

*Fifthly*, To confess our Sins freely to Almighty God.

The wise man tells us; that *he who covereth his sin, shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.* Prov. 28. 13. And indeed, if this be one of the Conditions of peace, I cannot see which way Man can free himself from the greatest Imputation of Folly, without the Practice of it. For what greater Folly can there be, than to endeavour the concealing of that from *his eye, who sees all things.* Let us carry on our Wicked Designs with all the Secresie of Thought, and Act our Wickedness in the Cloyster, yet God sees behind the Curtain, and whether we will or no, discovers all our Backslidings, and our Weakness; and therefore, since  
all

all things are thus naked, and manifest in his sight, we must needs look upon it as mighty becoming us, to assume to our selves the Words of the Prophet *Jeremiah*, Cap. 14. 7, 20. O Lord, though our iniquities testifie against us, yet do thou pity us for thy names sake; for our backslidings are many, we have sinned against thee. We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, for we have sinned in thy sight. Lastly,

Does God know the Intentions of our Hearts, and will he retribute to every Man according to the Work of his Hands? Then this may Arm us against all Malicious Reproach, or Opprobrious Calumny. For what signifies the False Aspersions of Men, since we have a Righteous Judge to deal with, who knows all our Actions, and the Integrity of our closest Intentions, who Reads the Sincerity of

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our Thoughts, and tries the very Hearts and Reins? Have we been sedulous and careful in our Duty; what matters it whether we have the Praise of Men or not, so long as we enjoy the *Euges* of a good Conscience; have we kept innocence, and taken heed to the thing that is right? What, tho' some part of the Malicious World should misrepresent us, and thereby cause the Arrows of Reproach to Assail and Wound us, will not the Balm of the Almighty Heal those Sores, and his being an Eye-witness of our Integrity, be a sufficient allay to our Sorrow? Will not his Approbation infinitely out-weigh the Calumnies of Men; and will not the Consideration of his Omnipresence, and his Justice, add a continual Jubile to our Minds and Thoughts? What remains then, but that we always so demean our selves, as  
that

that we may be able upon all occasions, to appeal to him, both as our Advocate, and our Judge. Plead thou my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me, fight against them that fight against me, let not them that are mine enemies, wrongfully rejoyce over me, neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause; for without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit, which without a cause they have digged for my soul; false witnesses did rise up, they laid to my charge things which I knew not; this thou hast seen, O Lord, keep not silence, O Lord, be not far from me. This is part of that Prayer, and Appeal, which Holy David made to God, when he was falsely accus'd to Saul, (1 Sam. 24. 9.) of that, of which he was most Guiltless. And if we can go and do likewise, if upon the like occasion, we can appeal to God for the sincerity of our hearts, and the

*cleanness of our hands in his eye-sight. If we have endeavour'd to the best of our Capacities, to be holy, as he is holy, and perfect, as our heavenly father is perfect; let the Malice, or Invention of Men, be never so much pointed against us; God will in his due time vindicate our Innocence, and Crown us with a Display of his Glory. He will not only make our righteousness as clear as the light, and our uprightness as the noon day, but will translate us from this valley of Hinnom, into the Regions of everlasting peace, joy, and felicity. Which God of his Infinite Mercy, &c.*

G E N.

## GENESIS XVIII. XX. XXI.

*And the Lord said, because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.*

**S**uch is the Mercy, such the Infinite Compassion of God Almighty, that as he afflicts not willingly, so he never without just cause, and evident provocation, punisheth the Sons of Men. Nay, so boundless, so overflowing is his Tenderness to Mankind; that altho' the most secret contrivances, and the most dark and midnight Schemes of Wickedness are all open, and manifest in his sight, yet merely to de-

fer the Inflicting of his Wrath ; he will often cast a dark shade over one of his Attributes, and veil his *Omniſcience* with Mercy, rather than ſeem too haſty in the Executing of his *juſtice*. *Sodom* and *Gomorrha*, were two great Cities in the Eaſt part of *Judea*, and as was the Extent, ſuch were the Sins of them ; & all great Cities abound with Vice ; & but (it ſeems) the Sin of theſe & was Notorious, was Grievous, it & made a Cry, and that Cry came & up before the Lord, to call for & deſerved Vengeance and Deſtruction. But God, tho' he was thoroughly convinc'd, that their *ſin was very grievous* ; yet becauſe he would wait their Repentance, as long as poſſible, and becauſe he would do nothing, but with the Appearance, as well as Reality of ſtrict Juſtice. He reſolves to go down, and ſee whether they have done altogether according

to the cry of it; that he might satisfy them, tho' Sinners, and by that Example, all Mankind after them, that he will be justified when he speaketh, and clear when he judgeth. Pf. 51. 4. That he will not Condemn any Person, or Destroy any Society of Men, until he have sifted, tryed, and fully examined every Punctilio of their Accusation, and thorowly know whether it be true or not; and for that Cause, the Lord said, because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrha is great, and because their sins are very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me, and if not, I will know.

As if God had said thus; 't's true indeed, that all things are naked and open before me, and that nothing can be hid from me. The closest Vault, is no defence from my Eye, and  
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the thickest Hanging, or the Curtain, cannot skreen Mankind from my sight. I am in their Chamber, and their Closet, in their darkeſt Apartment, and in their Cloyſter, with as diſcerning an Eye, as I am in their Shop, their Ware-houſe, or their Market; I equally ſpy *their Midnight Revels, their retired Chambering, and their Wantonneſs*, as I do *their false Weights, and deceitful Meaſures, which are an abomination unto me*. I ſaw all the Sons of Sodom, when they were but in *Embrio*, and I knew the Iniquity of *Gomorrha*, before it was ever brought forth; but yet tho' theſe things are as plain to me, as the Sun in it's Brighteſt Meridian; tho' as I am *juſt*, and cannot deceive, ſo I am *Omniscient*, and cannot be deceived; yet ſince I am going to Exerciſe the part of a Judge, and to Condemn a great and numerous People; I will not do

do this without proceeding according to the true Rules and Methods of Justice. 'Tis true indeed, their Sins have been very open and clamorous, and their own *Conscienc*es do evidently witness against them; but yet as Wicked as they are, *let the judge of all the earth do right,* and let him even the Eye of Mankind proceed, *secundum allegata & probata.* Tho' the Sins they stand Indicted of, be very grievous, yet they shall have a fair Tryal; for *I will go down, and see whether they have done according to the Indictment.* I will call their *Conscienc*es to an Account, and set all *their sins* open before them; I will enquire into every particular of their Charge, *whether they have done altogether to the cry of their sins, and if not; I will know.* i.e. I will however be thorowly satisfied, according to Judicial Proceedings, whether it be so or not,   
for

for because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrha is great, and because, &c. We may suppose that God Almighty spake according to the Tenure of these Words, which fairly suggest unto us, these following Particulars.

*First*, That nothing can move God to punish a People but their Sins.

*Secondly*, That he will delay this Punishment as long as possible ; he will not punish until their Sins be very grievous.

*First*, Nothing can move God to punish a People, but their Sins. *And the Lord said, because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrha is great, and because their sin is very grievous ; I will go down now and see, &c.*

The Dispensations of Providence, and the Ways of God, as to single and individual Persons, as to this Life, are not equal, but his Dealings are very Promiscuous, and un-

uneven ; ‘ we frequently see Vice  
 ‘ clad in the Livery of Unspotted  
 ‘ Virtue, and Beggary, and Oppres-  
 ‘ sion, lie at the Door of the Inno-  
 ‘ cent and Religious ; we often find  
 ‘ the Bramble out of the Wood,  
 ‘ devouring the Cedar of *Lebanon*,  
 ‘ and the Punishment of the Wic-  
 ‘ ked, too often the Lot of the Righ-  
 ‘ teous. But then, tho’ God does  
 thus Eclipse the Comforts of his  
 Children, and shew them nothing  
 for some time, but the dark side of  
 his Providence; he does this as the  
 Marks of his Love, and the Signa-  
 ture of his Favour ; *Affliction* is the  
 Badge of *Sonship*, and *the Chastise-  
 ments* of the Religious, are the To-  
 kens of God’s peculiar Love and  
 Care.

There are Spots in that Illustri-  
 ous Taper, the Sun, and there are  
 σφάλματα and Failures in the brigh-  
 test Saints ; and therefore, God in  
 Mercy

Mercy Inflicts some Temporal Correction upon them, to purge them from their Dross, to refine them from those Dregs of Sensuality, which are too apt to settle in the Hearts of the best of the Sons of *Adam*, or perhaps he doth it to make their Virtues more Resplendent, to exercise their Faith, their Patience, or Humility; that by such Improvements, they may have a more glorious Mansion in the Regions of Bliss. On the other hand, when God suffers the Sons of Wickedness to flourish like a green bay tree, to have every thing at their hearts desire; babes at their pleasure, and estates at their command; it is not because he hath a favour unto them, but as the Psalmist at large tells us, that they may be destroyed for ever. But now Societies, and Communities of Men, as such must either be call'd to an account, and rewarded or punished in this World, or  
not

not at all; for in the next World, every particular Person shall *give an account of himself to God*. Then the Courtier, and the Peasant, and the Plowman, and the Magistrate, the Poorest Lazar, and the most Proud Gallant, shall stand upon an equal Level. The Governours of Cities, if they have been Vitious, shall have no more favour shewn them, than the Scavenger of the Streets, nor the Judge who sat upon the Bench, receive any more respect, than the Prisoner who was once at the Bar before him. Impartial Justice shall be exercis'd at that day, and each single Person shall be distinctly and particularly rewarded according to his Righteousness and Religion; and therefore, when the Iniquities of a People come to a great Height, and a Nation seems through the greatness of her Strength, the multitude of her Associates, the depth of her Designs,



signs, or the Subtleties of her Coun-  
cels, to out-brave the Omnipotent  
Power of Divine Vengeance, when  
their Sins are become National, and  
pierce Heaven it self thorow the  
grievousness of them, then since they  
cannot be punished as a Communi-  
ty in the next World ; God usual-  
ly discovers himself in some common  
Calamity in this, and makes them  
feel and see, and *know that there is a  
God that judgeth on the earth.*

And this is so generally known  
by all those who have been any  
whit conversant in Sacred Story,  
that we need no aid from Prophane  
Authors, to exemplify the truth of  
it. We meet not in the whole  
History of the Bible, with one Judg-  
ment Inflicted upon a People, but  
we find the Cause, *i. e.* the Trans-  
gression Annexed to it. God spea-  
king to the *Israelites*, by *Moses*, con-  
cerning some Statutes and Ordinances

ces which he would have observ'd by them, *Lev. 18.* the Breach of some of which were the occasion of *Sodom's Destruction. v. 22. 23.* He summs up all, thus, *v. 24. 25, 26, 28.* Defile not your selves in any of these things, for in all these, the nations are defiled, which I cast out before you, and the land is defiled; therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land it self vomiteth out her inhabitants. And to the very same purpose, he speaks to the same People: *Deut. 8. 19, 20.* If thou do at all forget the Lord thy God, &c. I testifie against you this day, that you shall surely perish, as the nations which the Lord destroyed before your face. And that this was the constant Rule of dealing with his Chosen People *Israel*; the *Psalmist* at large assures us, in the *78.* and *106 Psalms*, where he reckons up the several Rebellions of that People against God their  
O King,

King, and God's Judgments against them for their doing so. To which, had I time, I might add how *Jerusalem* was ruin'd, and *Judah* fallen, because *their tongue, and their doings* was against the Lord; *Is. 3. 8, 16. &c.* How that for three transgressions, and for four, *Damascus, Gaza, Tyrus, Edom, Ammon, and Moab*, had fire sent out against them. *Amos 1. 3, 6, 9, 11, 13. ch. 2. 1.* I might give you many Instances likewise of the same nature, out of *Prophane Authors*, as well as *Sacred*. For that *Wickedness and Impiety*, doth draw down *God's Wrath and Vengeance* upon any People, is a Truth so universally receiv'd, that both *Jew and Gentile, Bond and Free*, agree in the Assertion. I remember that one of the *Roman Historians*, Imputes the Ruine and Decay of that Flourishing People, to the loosness of  
Men's

Men's Lives, and the Corruptness  
of their Manners.

And 'tis not I hope Foreign to  
our Purpose, to Relate a Story which  
bears Date in the time of *Charles*  
the Fifth of *France*, when *Calis* was  
taken from *England*, by the *French* ;  
a *Frenchman*, by way of Scorn and  
Derision, asked the *English* when they  
thought they should Regain it; to  
which, a Considerate Captain, made  
this Reply. *Cum vestra peccata erunt*  
*nostris majora* ; when your Sins ex-  
ceed ours in Number and Great-  
ness; there is no doubt but we shall  
Regain that Place. And indeed,  
we may Assert; that if God at any  
time bring greater Afflictions, or De-  
vastations upon one People than a-  
nother, be it by War, or Famine,  
or Pestilence, or any other Cala-  
mity; it is for the iniquity of those  
that dwell therein; and therefore we  
may with good Logick conclude,

when ever we see a State Harrastfed with Foreign Arms, or decay'd by Homebred Animofities, when we find Trade Decay, or a Country Depopulated; when we see this or that, or any other Calamity, Com-miffioned to make their Direful Vi-fits in a Land. It is *the vifitation of God's wrath*, and for thofe grievous Sins which have reach'd the Ears of the Almighty, and cry'd aloud for Vengeance. For God never Punifhes any Land, or Nation, or Commu-nity, but for the Sins thereof. And that's our firft Point which we rais'd from the Text. Before we difmifs which, let us fee what Obfervations we can draw from what hath been already delivered. And,

*First*, If nothing can move God to Punish a People but their Sins; then Sinful Men are the only oc-cafion of a Nations Mifery. We Read that one *Jonah*, had like to have

have sunk a Ship, and that the Folly of one *Achan*, did kindle the anger of the Lord against the children of *Israel*. Josh. 7. 1. David's Numbring of the People, brought a Plague upon them; and *Dinah's* Ravishment, occasion'd the Death of the *Sechemites*. Gen. 34. And indeed when the Judgments, or Vengeance of God falls upon a People, tho' we cannot *digito monstrare*, point out exactly whose Sin it was that occasion'd it; yet when our Sins are become National, and are in a Combination, when *Luxury*, and *Rioting*, and *Chambering*, and *Wantonness*, when *Pride* and *Oppression*, *fulness of Bread*, and *Idleness* rule amongst us; when Men rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink, and continue until night, till wine inflame them; when they draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin, as it were with a cart-rope; when men call evil good, and good evil, put darkness

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ness for light, and light for darkness, when they justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him; when these or any other crying Sins do reign, and proudly boast themselves amongst us, we may be assur'd, that so much of these Sins as any one of us have added to the common heap, so much Sorrow, and so much Affliction have we brought upon the Publick. And this we have fully vouched by the great Prophet *Esaiah*, Chap. 5. where he particularizeth in most of the afore-mentioned Sins, and concludes, v. 25. *Therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them and the hills, that is the Men of the greatest Eminence did tremble, and their carcasses were torn in the midst of the streets: For all this, his anger is not turned away, but*

his hand is stretched out still. But should we plead not Guilty to this whole Charge, and were we really able to clear our Innocence from the Imputation of any of all the Crimes above cited; yet, God knows there is one Epidemical Sin, and as certain a fore-runner of a Nations Ruine, which the generallity of this Kingdom, from the highest to the lowest, from the Proud, that is placed amongst Princes, to the Miscreant, that sits upon the Dunghil, must Plead Guilty too. I shall refer you to it, and beg of you seriously to consider, and take notice of it; 'tis Recorded in Jer. 23. 10. *For because of swearing, the land mourneth, and the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up.* And if that single Transgression be enough to make a fruitful land barren. Good God! What will become of this Poor Nation of ours?

For Oaths and Curses, are now become the Ornaments of our Speech; and he is not well Accomplish'd, who cannot Swear with a Grace, and Curse with a *Gusto*; nay, which is beyond whatever we meet with, either in Sacred, or Prophane History; (and therefore we may tremble to think of the Effects of it) we can now scarce pass the Streets, but we may hear little Children Swear by their Maker, before their Parents have taught them to know what God is; so that we are really now more vile, than those Idolaters, who *forc'd their children to go through the fire to Moloch*, for we wink at, or by our Evil Example, instigate our Children, to do that which brings them in, as Causes of the Nations Ruine, and by that means entail a Curse upon them, as well here, as hereafter. For if nothing can move God to Punish a People,

ple, but their Sins, then so far as Persons are Sinful, they are the occasion of a Nations Misery. And therefore it doth by good consequence follow.

*Secondly*, That if we intend to approve our selves to have any Loyalty towards our Governours, or any Love for our Native Country, we must lay aside those Sins, shake off those Vipers, that sting them to Death.

'Twas a Wise Question of *Seragastio* (in one of *Plautus's Comedies*) *Ut munitum tibi visum est Oppidum*; how doth the Town seem to be Fortified? and 'twas as Sober an Answer, *Si incolæ bene sint morati, pulchrum munitum arbitror*; if the Inhabitants be good, I think it to be well Fortified; and then reckoning up many Vices, he concludes, *Hæc nisi inde aberunt, &c.* Unless these be absent, all their Fortifications

tions are not enough for its Defence ; which Saying, was equivalent to what is Recorded by Cedronus, in his Annals of Nicephorus P<sup>ro</sup>cop<sup>us</sup>. Who when he Built a mighty Wall about his Palace, for his Security, heard a Voice in the Night-time crying out unto him, *ὦ Βασιλεῦ ὑψοῖς τὸ τεῖχος, &c.* O Emperor ! tho' thou buildest thy wall as high as the clouds, yet if sin inhabiteth in thy palace, no fronts, no buckler of defence can guard thy person, or secure thy diadem. And it was the Observation of one of the Bravest Captains which the State of Rome ever had ; that it was impossible for any Government to be Safe or Happy. *Stantibus mœnibus, Ruentibus moribus.* Tho' their Citadels were firm, if their Manners were decay'd. For the greatest Bulwarks, the most Secret Counsels, the Subtlest Contrivances, the Valiantest Souldiers, or the Bravest Com-

Commanders, cannot be guard sufficient for that People, who have arm'd Heaven it self against them by their Iniquities. Now we live in an Age where there is much Contention, about the Support of Government, and Allegiance, and Submission to Governours; where we look upon it as an unpardonable Crime, to act, or think contrary to the Principles of that Government, or that Church which is now Established by Law. But *I beseech you brethren, to suffer the word of exhortation, and consider,* that if we intend to approve our selves good Subjects, or good Citizens, and to testifie that we love our Prince, our Country, our Religion, we must *lay aside the works of darkness, and put upon us the whole armor of light.* We must furnish our selves with all those Christian Graces, which are laid down in the Gospel, and live up



up to those Rules to which God hath adjoyn'd the Promises of Happiness in this Life, as well as that which is to come. We must stand strict Centinel against our Sins, and by our Piety and Obedience, guard our Selves and our Country from Impendent Ruine. For this will stand us in more stead, even for our Temporal Defence; than either Uambrace, Pouldron or Gantlet, and be much firmer Defence, than Shield, Munition, or Coat of Maile. This will Establish our Religion, Property, or Government, upon more lasting Foundations, than either a Foreign Force, or Domestick Policy. 'Twill stave off the Judgments of God from Approaching our Dwellings, and settle us in Publick Peace and Safety all the Days of our Lives. Whereas on the other hand, there is no so great Rebel, no so bad Citizen, or unpro-

profitable Common-wealths-man, as a Wicked, as a Sinful Person, for he brings Ruine upon his Prince, as well as his Country, and upon the Body, as well as the Head; and this we have vouch'd by the Mouth of a *faithful Prophet*. 1 Sam. 3. 20. *If ye do wickedly* (it is not, if your King, or Governours, but spoken to the People; if ye do Wickedly) *ye shall be consumed, both you and your king.* You shall perish, but not alone, for your King shall do so too for your Fault, your Rebellion against God shall devolve upon his Vicegerent; and notwithstanding all your pretences to Loyalty, your Disobedience shall be his Ruine. Let me beseech you therefore, if you will not be perswaded for your own, for your Posterity, for your poor Souls sake, yet *Parce, Carthagini, si non tibi*; if you will not be good to your self, yet spare

spare *Carthage*, spare your Country, spare the Chariots of *Israel*, and the Horsemen thereof. If your Loyalty be not merely complement, or humour, and your pretensions to Obedience, be any thing else than a Vail of Hypocrisie. *Fear God*, which is the only true way, by which you can attest that you Honour the King. For 'tis not the frequent Drinking of his Health, or Carousing down Prosperity to the Nation, 'tis not drinking a *Floreat* to Religion, as by Law Establish'd, or Subversion and Confusion to our Foreign, or Domestick Enemies, which will bespeak us good Subjects, or good Patriots, but our living up to that pure, that undefiled Religion, which is Professed amongst us; 'tis not our Oaths, how Faithful we are to our Prince, or our Damme's against those, who we think are not strictly of our own Kidney, that

that will approve us Loyal and Faithful ; no these rather attest that we hate our Country, and the Governours of it, whilst our Sins joyn Force with the Enemies Camp ; whilst our Oaths are as pernicious as the Plague, and our Curses more Mortal than Gun-shot. Let us arise therefore, in the Name, and Fear of God, and conquer all our Enemies, by *subduing of our Lusts*. Let us approve our selves to be willing to give *Cesar his due*, by not denying *God his*, but live as becomes vertuous and good Christians, and let us shew that we really wish, and endeavour the Defence of our Country , and the Continuance of our Religion, by avoiding those Sins, as we would that Pestilential Disease, or those Heretical Principles, which would destroy the former, and root out the latter. For this is the only true *Criterion*, which

which can give Evidence, that we bear Allegiance to our Governours, or Love to our Country. And this is the second Observation deducible, from the first general Head; from whence I proceed to Discourse of the second Head, which the Text suggests unto us, viz.

II.

That God will delay the Punishing of a People as long as possible. He will not Punish, until *their sins be very grievous. Because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now and see, saith the Lord, &c.*

We should every one of us, God knows, have been in a very sad deplorable condition, should Almighty God, as in Justice he might have cut us off, upon the commission of our first Transgression, we should long ago have taken possession of the dismal *Tophet* below; had such been the Rigour of God's Proceedings. *For in many things, we*  
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we offend all; and therefore, if we say that we have no sin, we deceive our selves, and the truth is not in us. For who can tell how oft he offendeth? But such is the Infinite Mercy of that Almighty Being, that as he is desirous that Men should return and live, so he is always willing to wait their doing so. He long suffereth the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, Rom. 9. 22. and had rather be thought slack, as some count slackness, than that any should perish for want of suitable means to come to Eternal Life. And as he is thus gracious to each individual Person, so is he much more so to any Society, or Combination of Men. The *Old World* had the benefit of 120 Years warning to Repent of their Wickedness it had committed. And the *Israelites* had 40 Years space in the wilderness to prove them, and to try whether they would reform,



or not. The *Amorites* were not cut off, until *their iniquities were full*; and that great City *Nineveh*, had a *Prophet* sent on purpose from far to give them notice of their approaching Ruine? 'Tis one of the great Characters of God, and that in which he most delights; *Jer. 9. 24.* that he is a God merciful and gracious, abundant in goodness, *Exod. 34. 6.* and of great kindness. *Neh. 9. 17, 31.*

And that he still continues to be so, we of this Nation have had great Experience; for how often have we tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies, *Psalms 78. 56.* but have turned back, and dealt unfaithfully, like our fore-fathers. *v. 57.* How often have we provoked him to anger, with our crying sins, and moved him to jealousy, by our iniquities. *v. 58.* How oft have we tempted God by our distrustful thoughts, and limited the ho-  
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ly one of Israel. v. 41. How often have we to a miracle courted our own Ruine, by declaring our sins as Sodom, and being as shamefac'd in our wickedness as Gomorrha?

And yet God being full of compassion, forgave our iniquity, and destroyed us not; yea, many a time hath he turned his anger away, and hath not suffer'd his whole displeasure to arise. v. 38. This is the Account, which is given of the Israelites, in the 78 Psalm, and were it within the compass of my Time or Intentions, I might run the Parallel betwixt that People and our selves; and shew you that we have been every jot as defective as they. But 'tis enough for me to remind you, that God hath in a very high degree been gracious to us, hath a long time waited our Repentance, and by all the Methods of an obliging Love, and by repeated Mercies and Kind-

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ness, calls daily upon us, that we may Repent, and avert his Wrath from falling upon us. He hath not been so severe with us, as with *Israel, Judah, Moab*, and others of old Time, nor as with many Nations of late, not far distant from our own Borders; whose Sins, I doubt as little deserv'd his Angry Visitation as ours do. For let us but call our thoughts to remembrance, and summon together that scantling of Memory, which our *Riot* and *Excess* hath not as yet absolutely impair'd. Let us set our Sins in order before us, and bring the Catalogue of our Vices into open view; let us *commune with our own hearts*, and without Hypocrisie or Collusion, seriously *try and examine our ways*; dive into the Secrets of our several Trades and Callings; search into our natural Propensities; bethink our selves how many Sins  
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we have contracted by Evil Example, and what Examples of Wickedness, we our selves have been to others ; let us consider, how many we have enticed to Sin ; whose Sins will one day lie heavy at our door ; let us recount the Evil Habits, which we have contracted by custom, and hardened our selves in ~~them~~, by continual Practice ; let us do all this, and do it seriously with a due regard to *God* and our *Consciences* ; and then let us say, whether God hath not long born with us, and hath still spared this Sinful Nation ; tho' indeed the Sins thereof be already, like those of *Sodom* and *Gomorraha*, very grievous. [ And that's the second particular, implied in the Words of the Text. That God does long wait the return of a People, and will not punish, until their Sins be very grievous. From whence, I shall only draw

an Inference, or two, by way of Application; and so conclude.

*First*, Let us admire and laud the goodness of God, who hath so long waited our return, and hath not as yet consum'd us.

God has been pleas'd to tell us, that judgment is his strange work, and we above all People, have great reason to concur with him in that gracious Expression. For were it not of his mercy, we had (as you have heard) long e'er this been utterly destroyed. O that men would therefore praise his goodness, and declare the wonders that he doth for the children of men. That they would come into his courts with thanksgiving, and into his gates with praise, be thankful unto him, and speak good of his name!

And indeed, if we consider how great things he hath done for us; we cannot but be deeply affected at the sense of them; for it is not a  
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of vast Favour for God to continue his daily Mercies towards us, whilst we daily continue to abuse them? Is it not a signal Mark of his Infinite Benignity, to forbear Punishing those Sins in us, for which he hath destroyed other Nations before us? Nay, yet farther; is it not an inexpressible Token of his good Will towards us; whilst instead of his Judgments, we are surrounded with Mercies. That we live in a Country which is freed from that Scarcity of Bread, which *Egypt, Canaan, Samaria and Jerusalem* were afflicted with; that we have been a long time exempt from the Terrour of the Sword, and the Noisome Pestilence; that we sit under our own Vine, and rejoyce under our own Fig-tree, and are Defended by wholesome Laws, and enjoy the best and purest Religion in the World? The Thoughts and Enjoyments of these



Blessings, should methinks transport us into Extasies of Praise, and cause us both to magnifie, and to be obedient to the God of our salvation; forcing us to say unto him, as the Israelites did to Moses, *whatsoever thou commandest us this day; that will we do.* And that's the last thing deducible from this second Head, viz. That,

*Secondly,* We do not only admire and laud this Goodness of God, but that we shew forth his Praise, by our Speedy Reformation.

God, as he hath no need, so he values not these *Eulogies*, which come out of feigned Lips, and all Praise is such, which is not seconded with a ready Obedience to his Precepts. *Then are ye my disciples, when ye do whatsoever I command you.* He sets no Estimate upon the fair Promises of that Son, who says, *I go, but goes not*; nor does he regard the most spe-

specious Doxologies, if darken'd, and eclips'd with the Clouds of our Iniquities. We may daily upon our Knees, bless God for the Support of our Religion amongst us ; but if we do not live up to it's Precepts, our Solemn Worship is Hypocrisie, and our Sacrifice of Thanksgiving, an Abomination unto him. We may every Meal thank him for our Plenty; but if we abuse it to Riot and Excess, we in vain offer up our Praise, whilst we do not make a right use of it. *When I fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots houses; shall not I visit for these things, saith the Lord, and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?* Jer. 5. 7, 9. We may laud God for the Support of our Laws, the Preservation of our Governours, and the Enjoyment of our Liberties; but if we continue yet in our Sins, we

we do but lie to our Maker, and daily provoke him to subvert the first, destroy the second, and thereby deprive us of the third. So that in a Word, this is the summ of the whole Matter; if we will have our Thanksgivings to God for the continuance of his Blessings towards us, to avail any thing, they must proceed out of clean Lips, and a pure Heart; they must be accompanied with the *simplicity of the spirit*, and with the *fruits of repentance*; for this is more acceptable to him, than all the *Allelujahs* or loud *Hosannahs* of Men and Angels. I beseech you therefore Brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service, and be not conformed unto this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that we may prove what is that good and acceptable will of God. Rom. 12. 1.

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2. And let the time past of your lives, suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles. 1 Pet. 4. 3. When you walk'd in lasciviousness, lust, excess of wine, Revellings, and banquetings, and the like ; and let us awake out of our Lethargy of Sin. For, the night is far spent, the day is at hand ; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, &c. Let us walk honestly, as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envy ; but let us put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and not make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. Rom. 13. 12, 13, 14. But let us repent, and turn our selves from all our transgressions ; so iniquity shall not be our ruine. Ezek. 18. 30.

JOHN

## JOHN V. XXXIX. XL.

*Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testifie of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.*

SO Great, so Infinitely Transcendent was the Love of God to fallen Man; that the *first Adam* had no sooner forfeited his Right to Paradise, but the *second Adam* was promised to Reinstatè Mankind in the Grace and Favour of his Maker; and since it was inconsistent with the Justice of God, to pardon the Sin of Man without some competent Satisfaction, and that Satisfaction, could not be made by a Finite Creature; therefore *Almighty God*

God offers the *eternal Son* of his love, as a Sacrifice to skreen the whole Race of *Adam*, from that Vengeance which they had deserv'd.

*The seed of the woman shall break the Serpents head. A Virgin shall conceive and bring forth a Son, which shall be called Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins.*

These were the Mercies, these the fresh Overtures of Grace, which God thought fit to offer to the Sons of Men. And that this promised Seed, might be fully and evidently known, when he should visibly appear with these glad tidings of great joy; God all along from the Morning of his Promise, till the day spring from on high, had visited us, gave fair display's of this Son of Righteousness, by Types and Prophecies, and the shadows of good things to come.

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For through that long Succession of Ages, from the Infancy of the World, till the *fulness of time*, Mankind receiv'd frequent Notices, and large Descriptions of that Saviour, who was to *take away the sins of the world*; And that the King of Heaven might not leave himself without witness; he rais'd up and inspir'd the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, to foretell, and as it were portray the Lively Image of God incarnate, and the Sufferings, as well as *brightness of his Person*. In answer to which gracious predictions, when the *fulness of time was come*, God sent his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of Sons. Gal. 4. 4; 5. And now upon the Completion of this Sacred Prophecy; methinks I see the guilty Sons of Adam, hast with winged speed into the Embraces

braces of a Loving Redeemer, and swiftly fly to Reverence and Adore his Sacred Person. Methinks I hear all the *Sages* of the *East*, unanimously agree to Worship this New-born King; and the *Sanhedrim*, and the *Scribes* concur in their Testimony, that *Jesus is the Christ*.

Methinks I at once view all the *Sons and Daughters of Judah*, and all the *Inhabitants of Jerusalem*, with profound Reverence, bowing their Knee to their New-born Saviour. Methinks I hear with what Active Joy, and Chearful Acclamations the glad Tidings were received, even in the *land of Palestine*, and the *Persian Court*; and how the whole World resounds nothing but *glory be to God on high, on earth peace, good will towards men*? And when the *Manger*, and the *Swadling-cloaths* are dismist, and this glorious *Son of the most high* is advanc'd from the *Simplicity* of his

his Infant State, to the Purity of his Flowry Youth; do you not observe how the grave Doctors, not only stand amaz'd at the Wise Questions, and Profound Answers of this Divine Stripling; but even own their Knowledge baffled, and their *Theorems* run a ground; farther, when he is enter'd upon his Sacerdotal Office; may we not suppose that we behold all the *Jewish Rabbins*, own him as their *Masoretha*, and the *Sophoi* of the *Greeks* acknowledge him as their only Oracle; see them stand amaz'd at the mighty wonders which he wrought; and with one voice, breathing out that great Truth of the *Centurion*, and those that were with him; *truly this is the Son of God*. In a Word, may we not behold how not only the *Jews*, but even how all the whole Earth unanimously cry out as with the Voice of one Man; *Hosanna in the*

in the highest ; and how both the Learned, and the Illiterate with one Heart joyn in the Completion of that Prophetick Song of Zacharias. Luke 1. 68. *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up a mighty salvation for us in the house of his servant David, &c.*

May we not I say, reasonably suppose that we behold all Mankind thus Acting upon the Stage of this World? But yet alas, Rational as the Suppositions may seem to be, we find them attended with a quite contrary Issue. For altho' this Blessed Son of God, this long expected Messiah, was manifested by the Holy Ghost, and with Power, tho' he was Preach'd by Angels, and fore-told by all the Prophets ; tho' he came in the fulness of time, and as to his Lineage, and Place of his Nativity, answer'd

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each Punctilio, of what was foretold of him; nay, tho they were convinc'd that he answer'd all the Types and Prophecies, and that he was of a truth that *Messiah*, that was so compleatly pointed out to them in Holy Writ; yet when he came unto his own, his own received him not; but being wilfully blinded thorow Prejudice, Pride, and Worldly Grandeur, obstinately chus'd to perish, rather than own him as the promised seed of David; for this is the Account which he gives of them, in my Text. *Ye search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testifie of me. And ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.* Ye do search the Scriptures; for so *Ἐρευνᾶτε τὰς γράφας* seems here plainly to import, the Word *Ἐρευνᾶτε* being rather the Indicative, then the Imperative Mood, as seems consonant to the purport

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of the Context. For our Blessed Saviour, does not go about so much to inform their Judgment, as to reprove their Will; the Obstinacy of which, was the only thing which obstructed their non-entertaining of him. For, as he observes, 1st. *John the Baptist*; who in their own Opinion, was so extraordinary a Person, that they put that Question to him, *whether he were the Christ, or whether they were to expect another*, v. 32. Had given them a plain Testimony of *this Jesus, whom we now preach*. But then he had, as he tells them, secondly, a greater witness, than that of *John*, v. 36. He having done such Miracles, as did plainly denote that he was that Person, that God had sent to heal the broken hearted, to preach good tidings to the meek, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the



acceptable year of the Lord, and to comfort all that mourn; to all which he adds in the third place. The Testimony of their own Minds and Knowledge; a Testimony which could no ways deceive them, their own Senses and Understanding being Judge; nay, such a Testimony as they solely rely'd upon to be their Guide and Conductor to Eternal Life; and therefore were so frequently conversant with it, and with so strict a scrutiny search after it, that they could not but know that he was the Messiah, and therefore must be obstinately Blind, or prodigiously Wicked, if they would not own him to be such. *Ye search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me; but ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.* That is; if first ye should be so distrustful as to disbelieve the Testimony of John, concern-

cerning me, or if secondly, ye will  
 not believe me for my works sake, but  
 impute all to the power of *Shem*  
*Hamphorash*, or to the *Theurgick* Art,  
 or Magick, or to the Assistance of  
*Belzebub*; yet you who are so ex-  
 traordinary well Read in the Law  
 and the Prophets, that ye under-  
 stand not only the Contents of them,  
 but even how many Words, how  
 many Syllables, nay, how many Let-  
 ters are contain'd in the Canonical  
 Scriptures; you who are thus ex-  
 actly vers'd in Holy Writ, can-  
 not chuse but be fully satisfied that  
*I am the promised seed of David*, the  
*Messiah*, whom according to the Pre-  
 dictions of those Holy Books, ye,  
 at this time so earnestly expect;  
 and therefore ye are absolutely  
 inexcusable, if you now reject me,  
 and obstinately refuse to come unto me,  
 that you may enjoy those Promises  
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which have been made to you, and your *fore-fathers of old*.

Which Words, thus explain'd I shall resolve into this plain Proposition. That the Holy Scriptures, *i. e.* the Old Testament, did so plainly signify, or give such Evidence, that Christ Jesus was the true *Messiah*; that nothing but a wilful Obstinacy could occasion the *Jews* not to believe in him. Which being dispatch'd; I shall then by way of Application, make reference of all to our selves, by humbly comparing our present Case, with that of the Obstinate *Jews*, so severely reprehended in my Text, and shew if we be yet in our Sins; with how much greater reason our Blessed Saviour may charge us now with an obstinate Folly and Impiety, than he did them heretofore.

*First*, That the Old Testament, does plainly signify, or give sufficient

cient evidence, to every Understanding Man; that Christ Jesus was the true Messiah, who was to come into the World.

In treating of which, it would not be any digression to insist upon all those Sacrifices, Types, and Figures, which are greatly significative of that Satisfaction, which our Blessed Saviour by being Sacrificed for us, was to make for the Sins of the whole World; such as the Passover of the Lamb, the Sacrifice of the Red Heifer, the sending of the Scape Goat into the Wilderness, the raising up of the Brazen Serpent, &c. But since our Blessed Saviour seems to refer them, as it were to some of the most substantial places of Scripture, which if fulfilled, do evidently demonstrate him to be the Redeemer of the World. I shall therefore Treat of some of those Texts, which they

themselves own do relate to the Messiah; and which if come to pass (as in the scope of this Discourse it will appear they are) will argue them incorrigibly obstinate for thus *denying the Lord of life.*

First, then, God Almighty was pleas'd to promise to *Abraham* his Servant, that *in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed.* Gen. 18. 18, 22. 18. Which Promise, *Abraham* transmitted to *Isaac*, and *Isaac* to *Jacob*, and *Jacob* left it upon Record to his Children, in these Words: *The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the lawgiver from between his feet until Shilo come.* Gen. 49. 10. Now *Onkelos's Targum*, the *Zoar of the Cabbalists*, the *Chaldee Paraphrast*, and the *Falmudists*, all agree that this Saying was meant of the *Messiah*; the meaning of which Words, is briefly this; that there shall be some of the

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*Tribe of Judah*, who shall Reign over the *Jewish Nation* till *Christ* come, and no longer, or that *Judah* should never cease from being a State, a Body, Politick, or Commonwealth, or be without having a Power of Government, and Jurisdiction within it self, until *Christ* or the Anointed came, and no longer, for then, *i. e.* at his coming it shall wholly depart. Now altho' the *Tribe of Judah* have not always been in real Possession of the Kingdom (as before *David's* time) in *Babylon*, and under the *Asmoneans*, who were of the *Tribe of Levi*, yet it never lost the Title, and Right to it, but hath always kept some Relict of their Jurisdiction, which the *ten Tribes* had wholly lost, and were totally depriv'd of long before the Captivity. Nay, even in the time of the Captivity, the *Jews* had a *Reschgaluta*, a Chief, or Head Gover-



Governour, whom they always chose of the *Tribe of Judah*, and peculiarly of the *House of David*, as their own *Histories* attest; and after the *Captivity*, 'tis evident from their own *Authours*; that the *Jews* that returned out of *Babylon*, continued under a *National Establishment*; nay, were still Governed by some of themselves, till the *Romans* imposed *Herod*, an *Idumean* upon them, in whose *Time* our *Saviour* was Born; so that the *scepter* did not depart from *Judah*, nor a *law-giver* from between his feet, till *Shilo* came; but just upon the coming of *Christ*, that *Tribe* lost all it's *Authority* and *Jurisdiction*, and had not so much as the shadow of *Government* remaining in it; for 'tis evident from *Josephus*, a *Jewish* *Writer*; that the *Romans* being *Lords* of *Jewry*, did set up *Herod* the *Son* of *Antipater*, an *Edomite*, i. e. a mere *Stranger* to  
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be King there, one, who was so far from being of the *Tribe of Judah*, that he was not an *Israelite*, who Marrying the Daughter of *Hircanus*, who only remain'd of the Stock of the *Maccabees*, killed both him and his Daughter, and all the Children whom he had begotten of her, and rooted out (say's my Author) as many of the House of *Judah*, as lived in any Countenance and Credit, defaced their Titles, and burnt their Pedigrees, and made whom they pleas'd High Priests, but not according to their *Tribes*. To which *Philo* the Jew, to corroborate this Testimony, adds, that he slew all the *Sanhedrim*, i. e. the seventy two Senators of the House of *Judah*, which were Assistants to the King, and put Profelytes, and Strangers in their stead; by which means, about the Thirtieth Year of his Reign he became Absolute, and  
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Ruled all Things, as he himself alone thought fit, ever since which time, which is *above* 1600 Years, there has not been any one Man (being a *Jew* born) that hath any where had any Authority, great or small among the *Jews*, for so Zealous was *Vespasian*, *Titus*, *Domitian*, *Adrian*, and several other of the *Roman Emperours*, to extirpate the whole House of *Judah*, that at this day, there is not a *Jew* amongst all their scattered Tribes, that can prove his Descent, or give any tolerable Account, that he is of the *Tribe of Judah*, i. e. of the *Blood Royal*, of which *Christ* was promised.

Thus you see, that in the Reign of *Herod*, the Kingdom of the *Jews* was conveyed to Strangers, and the *Jewish Senate* utterly extirpated, and the *Tribe of Judah* so wholly de-vested of all Authority, that they have ever since been without King, with-

without Governour, without Judge, without Genealogie, and without certain Succession; so that *Shilo*, i. e. the *Lords Anointed*, must either be already come, or that Text which the *Jews* themselves always own'd to be Prophetick of the Messiah, must no way relate to him. But whether it related to him or not, yet since they really believ'd that it was Prophetick of him, they are utterly inexcusable for not receiving of him, when he did come, because they *searching the Scriptures* so diligently, could not but know that at that very time, when Christ was born, *this Scripture was fulfilled in their Ears*.

*Secondly*, The next Proof which I shall bring for their Obstinacy, in the wilful refusal of the Lord of life, shall be rais'd from that Prophesie of *Micah*, Chap. 5. 2. And thou *Bethlehem Ephrath*, tho' thou  
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be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

'Tis observable, that altho' the Prophet Micah, be the only Prophet, who had the Honour to foretel the Place of our Blessed Saviours Nativity, yet he did it with that Clearness and Perspicuity, that the Jews did unanimously agree that Christ was to be Born in Bethlehem, from thee, O Bethlehem, shall spring Messiah the Son of David, say their own Rabbins, and the Chaldee Paraphrast. And when Herod enquir'd of the Scribes, and the Wise Men, where Christ should be born, Mat. 2. 4. They immediately with one accord (without the help of Divination) satisfy him that Bethlehem was to be the Place of his Nativity. For thus, say they, it is writ-

written by the Prophet, &c. v. 5. Now in Holy Scripture, we find that there is mention made of two Places of this Name, the one in the Tribe of Zebulun. Josh. 19. 1. And the other of the Tribe of Judah, viz. Bethlehem Ephrata, so called by Moses, more than a Thousand Years before. Gen. 35. 19, 48, 7. And therefore that the Place of this Royal Persons Birth might not be mistaken; our Prophet here does particularly foretel it by both it's Names, which being so evident, was with a general consent received as an Object of their Faith, both by the Prophet and the Apostles, by Priest and People, by the Profound Doctors, and their Learned Disciples; so that when he was Represented as a Galilean, they concluded his being so, an irrefragable Argument that he could not be the Christ.



Christ, for *Christ was to come from Bethlehem, John 7. 42.*

And now what Subterfuge, what Excuse can the *Jews* find, for not receiving this *Jesus as the Lord of life*? Are they not fully convinc'd, that he was Born according to the Predictions of the Prophet *Micah*? Do they not own him as a *Bethlemite*, and that his Mother, whose Name was *Mary*, was of the Line of *Zorobabel*, of the Tribe of *Judah*? There were many indeed, who bare the Name of *Jesus*, both in the time of the first and second Temple; but which of them all was Born at *Bethlehem*, or who amongst them was it of whom the Prophet spake, *save of our Messias*? He was to come into the World whilst this little City remain'd amongst the Governours of *Judah*; but where is now the City of *Bethlehem*, or what place among the Governours of *Judah* doth it now retain? Nay, indeed where is there a Governour of the Tribe

of *Judah*, or where a Law-giver of *David's* Line? These Questions plainly as they are put, would puzzle the Heads of all their Learned *Rabbins*, nay of their *Sanhedrim* it self, were it now in being for to Answer. For if Matter of Fact so clearly prov'd, so generally own'd as true, and so universally acknowledged as Prophetick, and fulfilled; if I say this may not command belief, we cannot be oblig'd to believe any thing but what our own Eyes are Witnesses of; and consequently it would be necessary that our *Messiah* should appear to us in every Age, or else that only, *that single Age* wherein he was born, should be oblig'd to believe that he had already made his Appearance. For is not this plainly the Language of those, that own'd that *Christ* was to be born at *Bethlehem*, and that too whilst it was under

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the Jurisdiction of some of the Tribe of *Judah*, and who finding likewise that the Person, whom we own as our Jesus, was born there, and at such a time too, viz. whilst it was under the Government of one of that Tribe, shall notwithstanding all this deny him to be the Christ, nay, deny that Christ is come, tho' *the Scepter be departed from Judah and Bethlehem have no being* ? To all which, were it necessary, I might as a farther Proof of their Inveterate Obstinacy, insist upon that noted place of *Malachy*; that *Elias* should first come, 4. 5. and shew how in every Punctilio it was compleated in *John the Baptist*, who as *the fore-runner of Christ*, came in the Power and Spirit of *Elias*, as the *Jews* themselves own, which as I observ'd before, occasioned so many to flock to him, and to believe on him, and made them ask that Question. *Art thou he that shall come, or shall we expect another.* I might add the Testimony of their Great and Holy Rabbi *Hecadock*; that the mother of  
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the *Messias* should be a *Virgin*, and that her name should be *Mary*, as he Learnedly Collected (as they own) after the Art of the *Cabbalists*, out of these Words, in the ninth of *Esay*, *Lemarbeth*, *Hammiſrah*, and that of *Rabbi*; *Hacanas*, the Son of *Nebumiah*; who goes farther, and tells us, that this *Mary* should be of *Bethlehem*, the Daughter of *Jehoiakim Eli*, of the Line of *Zerobabel*, of the Tribe of *Judah*, of the Lineage of *David*. I might also Quote out of their own Writers, that he was called *Jesus* and *Emanuel*, and that in the last Book of *Esdraſ* (which tho' not Canonical) was Writ almost Three Hundred Years before *Christ*; he is ſtiled *my Son Jesus Christ*. 4 *Esdraſ* 7. 28, 29. Nay, I might Cite the Testimonies of the Devils themselves, whose Kingdom he came to destroy, that he is *the Christ the Son of God*; but these two Places are as a Thousand Witnes-

ses against all Gain-sayers ; and indeed if they will not upon such fair Evidence, *hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they believe, tho' one rose from the dead.*

And therefore I shall leave them in their Obstinacy, and by way of Application, make reference of all to our selves, by humbly comparing our present Case, with that of the Obstinate *Jews*, so severely reprehended in my Text, and shew you (if we be yet in our Sins) with how much greater reason our Blessed Saviour may charge us now with Folly and Impiety, than he did them heretofore ; and therefore we may reasonably expect a severer Punishment than they. For,

*First*, Does not our Knowledge, that *Christ Jesus* was the true *Messiah*, much surmount theirs ; and therefore if we do not receive him

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as such, shall not our Condemnation do so too?

'Tis true indeed, the *Jews* had grounds sufficient to convince them that *Jesus* was the promised Seed of *David*; but yet must not we *Christians* needs own that we have a more sure word of Prophecy? For had our Fore-fathers him wrapt up in Types, veild in Dreams, and beheld they him in Visions? We have beheld his glory, as the glory of the Son of God, and he has liv'd and dwelt amongst us. Had they the Testimony of the Prophets, and the Predictions of God's own Servants, to attest that he was really the Christ? We have not only *Moses* and the *Prophets*, but the Testimony of all the *Evangelists*, nay of *Angels*, as well as *Men*, to signifie to us, that he is the Saviour of the World. Did their Wise Men assure them that they found him at *Beth-lehem*,

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lehem, and see his Star, and worshipped his Person, and heard the Heavenly Host crying, *glory be to God on high?* We have and believe beyond all this, the Testimony of his Miraculous Resurrection, and an innumerable Company for Forty Days together, to attest that it was really he who was risen from the dead; we have several Witnesses to testify that he visibly ascended into Heaven, in order to his sitting at the right hand of God. But admit we, that they had as much, nay, greater reason to be satisfied, that Jesus was the Christ, than we now have, that they (at least some of them) had ocular Demonstration of the Verity of these Things; yet they did not actually believe on him; whereas, we own our selves to do so; and therefore, this likewise will enhance our Reckoning. A Superficial Faith, is no way pleasing to God, nor are

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our loudest Hosanna's to any purpose, if we do not those things which he commands us.

We have own'd, and avow'd Christ Jesus to be our Redeemer, by entring into Covenant with him at our Baptism; but did we not at the same time swear that we would renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh. We have perhaps, since renew'd that Covenant, by receiving the Holy Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ; but did we not at the same time, solemnly offer and present unto God our selves, our souls and bodies, to be an holy and acceptable sacrifice unto him; and therefore, if we do not perform these Covenants, but still behave our selves frowardly in his sight; we are so far from being better than the Jews, who deny'd him, that we add the breach of Oaths

to our Infidelity, and are indeed worse than *Jews*, in reality, whilst we are Christians in Profession; for do we not by this means bow the knee, cry hail master and kiss him; and yet at the same time, betray and crucifie afresh the Lord of life; do we not own him as our Lord, yet honour him not, and acknowledge him as our Redeemer, yet deny him Reverence. We wear his Badge, and put on his Livery, yet whilst we walk thus in *Sheeps Cloathing*, we are not inwardly *ravening Wolves*? And whether or no the great Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls, will own us to be *Sheep of his Fold*; (whilst we have nothing but the outward Profession of the Gospel) I leave you to judge.

'Tis true indeed, at such a time as this Men usually give Evidence of their Faith, that *Christ is come*, by preparing for a time of Excess  
and

and Debauch, by forecasting to have richer Apparel, or better Provisions. But alas, what signifies such Anniversary Returns of our Thanks or Devotion; whilst they are intermixt with Pride, Intemperance, and Profaneness? To what purpose is our Celebrating the Nativity of Christ, by a larger Table, or richer Apparel; when our Bodies, which ought to be the Temple of the Holy Ghost, are full of Sin and Impurities? Or to what purpose is the trimming of our Houses with Laurel, in Token of a Triumphant Jesus, whilst they are defil'd with the Leaven of Unhallowed Thoughts, or Unclean Affections?

*Christ came into the world to purifie unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works; and therefore, if we be not such, our loudest Eulogies will be turned into Sin, and our Praises will become of none effect.*

fect. God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil; and if we will suffer Sin to Triumph and Reign in our Mortal Bodies; we in vain Celebrate his Coming, and own him as the true *Messiah*. For tho' the Evidences of our Faith, and knowledge of this great Article, surmount that of the *Jews*; yet if our Faith be without Works, what will it avail us in the day of Wrath, unless it be to heat the Furnace seven times hotter for us. But then,

Secondly, As our Knowledge, so our Obligations much surmount theirs. For was not the *Jews* the chosen people of God, and heirs of the promise, whilst we were only the children of the bond-woman, and labour'd under Gentile Darknes. Did not God for their Unbelief, give them over to a Reprobate Sense? And did he not whilst we were even Enemies, and Strangers to him; convert us by the  
 foc-

*foolishness of preaching?* What were the Reasons why he should send an early Apostle to Preach to us the glad Tidings of Peace, and at the same time lay himself as a stumbling-block, and a stone of Offence to the *Jews*? Or to what other reason, but his own accountable Mercy, can we ascribe his continuing his *pure, and undefiled Religion* amongst us for so many hundred Years; whilst his own *peculiar people sit in darkness, and the shadow of death*. Have we not very often provoked him to anger by our sins, and mov'd him to jealousy by our iniquities? And yet how in mercy has he forborn us, and consumed us not? Nay, have we not often like the *Obstinate Jews*, hardened our Hearts against God, and as if we design'd to run paralel with them, have sin'd against the full Convictions of Conscience, and an enlightened Understanding; and yet  
how



how often hath he *spared us for a time, and times, and part of time,* and hath continued to us his Blessings, and the full Light of his Gospel? And now must we not own that our Obligations towards God, do abundantly surmount those of the *Jews*? And consequently, can we do less than acknowledge, that he has much greater reason to reprehend us now, if we do not make a right use of them, than he had to reprove them heretofore? And that our Punishment shall be greater in the next World, if we be not Reformed in this.

But then, *Lastly*, The *Jews* who liv'd only upon the hopes of good things to come, were very diligent in *searching the Scriptures*, lest they should miss of the Promises; and therefore if we who live under the Fruition of those Blessings do not so, this also will enhance our Condem-

demnation. For is it not a shame, and a scandal for us *Christians*, that they should be so careful in the searching of the Old Testament, that they know how many Words, nay, how many Letters were contained in it; and yet that we who have receiv'd the Testament of Grace, should set little or no regard by it? Did they spend the greatest part of their time in enquiring into those Divine Truths; the fulfilling of which, were so remote from them, and shall we, now we have them fulfilled, and enjoy them even with us, and amongst us, grow weary with an hour or two's persuing of them? Did their Kings and Princes (Men of the greatest business) take the pains to Transcribe them, and carry them about with them; and shall we, even when we have little or nothing to do, think our time  
se.

severely spent in the Reading and Meditating on them? Did the *Jews* think no Book worth their perusing, but that of *Moses and the Prophets*; and shall we take greater delight in a Prophane Authour; nay, even a Play, or a Romance? In a Word; do we take more pains in the setting of our Books of Account even, and the adjusting our Worldly Reckonings, than we do in auditing the Estate of our Souls, or consulting how our Eternal Interest stands? This our negligence in not trying our Everlasting State, by frequently searching into these Divine Truths, will greatly enhaunce our future Accounts; the *Jews* themselves did not so.

To summ up all therefore; let us all of us live up to that Knowledge, which God of his great Mercy has given us of himself, and of *Jesus Christ our Lord*; and let us

con-

consider, that our *faith without works is dead*. And to this end, let us often bethink our selves, what solemn Engagements we have entered into, by our Christian Profession; and by how many repeated Oaths, we have tyed our selves to *be holy, as God is holy, and perfect, as he who redeemed us is perfect*. To effect which, let us ever and anon reflect upon those great Obligations, which he hath laid upon us to be so; that we do not now walk by Types and Figures, but by the Light of God's Holy Spirit, and by the fair Display's of his Son Jesus; that we are now become the Elder Sons, the Heirs of God, and Coheirs with Christ. And to this purpose, let us lastly be extreamly diligent in the perusal of those Sacred Writings, which convey those great Priviledges and Promises to us; and let us never give our Blessed Re-  
dec-

deemer occasion to revert my Text upon us; ye Christians, search not the Scriptures, altho' ye profess to believe that in them ye have eternal life. But let us all of us, shake of our Old Sins, with the Old Year; and let the Circumcision of our Saviour, put us in mind of the Circumcising of our Hearts; and let as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, be buried with him, by baptism into death, and walk in newness of life; so shall we be Translated from the Serving and Praising of him here, to the full Enjoyment of him hereafter. Which God of his Infinite Mercy, grant, &c.

PSALM

## PSALM CXXVII. I.

*Except the Lord build the house, they  
labour in vain that build it :*

**H**E that bethinks himself, who  
it was that *form'd him in the  
Womb, and took care of him, whilst he  
yet hung upon his Mothers Breasts, and  
succour'd, and nourish'd him in his  
Infant State; who it was that pre-  
serv'd him through the Wild Sta-  
ges of his unthinking Childhood,  
and the more vain Sallies of his  
Intemperate Youth, who supported  
him through the growing Cares of  
the beginning of his Manhood, and  
buoy'd him up under the Solicitous  
Thoughts of his whole Age, until  
this present day. He that considers  
this, should, one would think, want*

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no



no Monitor to Advertise him ; that he has reason still to depend, and *throw all his care upon that God, who hath thus cared for him,* and to hope and expect for Success, from no other Hand but that of his Maker. Especially, should we add to all this, the infinite Kindness which God hath for those who love and fear his Name, and the many Promises which he hath made to the Righteous; that *all things shall go well with him, and that he will never leave him, nor forsake him ;* should we take notice of the more peculiar Deliverances, which he daily vouchsafes to those that *observe his statutes, and his testimonies, to do them,* and the continual Showers of Blessings, which he more especially causeth to *Rain upon the Just ;* to which, should we still add the frequent Disappointments of those, who *sacrifice to their net, and burn incense to their*

that their drag, and blefs and depend  
and upon outward Means, for a  
who secure Enjoyment of Sublunary  
nope Things; should we, I say, summ  
o o- up these, and all other the va-  
ker. rious Dispensations of God towards  
all the Sons of Adam; we must real-  
ly believe that Man devoyd of Rea-  
and son, and bereav'd of Understanding;  
Pro- who shall build his Confidence  
the and Assurance of Success upon any  
go thing, but in the strength of the Lord  
ver of Hosts. But yet, alas! look we  
uld. abroad into the World, and how  
cu- few are there that depend upon  
ily the Arm of God, as their Strength,  
his or look upon the Holy one of Israel  
m, as their Support! How few, who  
ef- consider that God is their rock, and  
u- the high God their redeemer? For  
h, how many are there who abso-  
nt lutely depend upon second Causes,  
a- without ever having an Eye to the  
to Great Authour and Maker of all  
ir  
S 2 Things?

Things? Who Establish their Confidence upon the Foundation of their own Strength, or Wit, and Policy, and never think that God Eyes the Wheel, or Directs the Motion. How many who for the Accomplishing of their growing Hopes, lay Scenes widely distant from the Rules of Piety, and build Castles of Assurance upon such Principles, as are vastly remote from the Word of God? Who superstructs upon their Wild Imaginations; and tho' *God be not in all their Thoughts*, through the whole Tract of their Affairs; yet let but things be carried on according to the bent of Humane Craft, or Worldly Policy, do confidently think that nothing can blast their Endeavours, or obstruct a successful issue? But this, my Brethren, is not to act like Men, or Christians. For *the issues of prosperity, or adverse fortune, are*

graven

graven upon the palms of the Almighty; and does advance or debase, whom and after what manner, he in his All-wise Providence thinks fit. In a Word, 'tis the Lord that maketh poor, and maketh rich, that bringeth low, and lifteth up, that raiseth the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar out of the dunghil; and therefore, unless he please to lift the light of his countenance and favour upon us; 'tis in vain that we rise up early, and so late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness; all our Watchings, and solicitous Thoughts, or best laid Counsels, and our subtlest Contrivance, will dwindle into Frustration, or a Curse. All our Towing Designs of Erecting a Family, or Establishing a Name for lasting Generations, will be to no purpose, but our Planting and Watering will be altogether in vain, unless God think fit to give the Blessing of In-

crease. For except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.

By building of a house (if we have recourse to the \* Original) is here meant the having of Children, to build up, or support a Family. As it is evident from comparing the Text with

\* אֲבָנָה יִבְנֶה בֵּיתָּהּ *I shall be built by her, i. e. I shall obtain children by her. Ruth. 4. 11 בָּנָה בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. Built the house of Israel. i. e. brought all that number to children of Jacob, יִבְנֶה אֶת בֵּיתוֹ Would not build up the house of his brother. Spoken of him that would not take his brother's wife, and raise up seed to him. Deut. 25. 9.*

the 16. Gen. 2. Exod. 1. 21. 1. Chr. 17. 10. and several like places of Scripture, where we find all along, that the same Word is used, for having an House Built, and having of Children to support a Family.

Which Words, considered in this Sense (which indeed is the Genuine meaning of them) may be resolv'd into this plain Proposition.

That

That the Wifest and moſt Induſtrious Attempts, towards the raiſing, or building up of a Family, cannot proſper, or ſucceed without the peculiar Bleſſing and Aſſiſtance of Heaven.

Which Propoſition, I ſhall conſider, Firſt, as it implies the begetting of Children, and Secondly, the providing Riches and Inheritance for them. For of theſe two things, the Erecting of a Family conſiſts. Wealth and Subſtance, tho' got by Honelt Care and Induſtry, tend very little to the perpetuating of our Name upon the Earth, unleſs we leave Children to Poſſeſs it; and the leaving of Children without Wealth, or a Competent Inheritance, is but like an Houſe built in the open and barren Wilderneſs, ſubject to all the Miſfortunes of Storm and Tempeſt, and diſreſpected, ſcorn'd, or little



regarded, because void of such Accommodations about it, as are necessary and convenient. But *Children* to Inherit my *Estate*, and a Plentiful *Estate*, for them to Inherit; this properly deserves the Name of a *well built Family*, as perpetuating our Memory with Honour and Credit, *from Generation to Generation*. But that these, nay, that neither of them, is absolutely in our Power and Command, nor can be attain'd without the Blessings of God, is my business at this time to evince. And therein,

*First*, 'Tis evident to every Understanding Person, that *children* are a gift and heritage which cometh of the Lord, Psalm 127. 3. For he alone can make the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children, Psalm 113. 9. And therefore, if the Wise Maker of Things, think fit to keep the Secret Cab-

net of Nature Lock'd, and to withhold the Blessings of Increase, all the Subtle Endeavours, and Wise Applications of the greatest *Apollo* upon the Earth, shall not be able to compose one Artery, or one Tendon, one Nerve, or one single Fibre towards a Natural Production. 'Twas he that first gave that Commission, *encrease and multiply and replenish the earth*; and if he think fit to Remand it, all *Israel* shall be a dry tree, and there shall be no verdure in the sons of *Jacob*; the Daughters of *Sion* shall be barren, and the children of *Jerusalem* shall not bear.

When *Sarah* continued so long under Discontent for want of Issue, and *Abraham* the Friend of God, had put that petitionary Question to the Almighty, *Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless*; there's no doubt but if the  
Nard

*Nard of Arabia, or the Gold of Ophir, would have made the Purchase, the Distemper of her Mind would have been remov'd; but Abraham, though the Father of the Faithful, had no such Blessing in his disposal, but must wait God's Time and leisure; and then when the Almighty sendeth forth his voice, tho' Sarah be old and stricken in years, yet she shall have pleasure, her Lord being old also, Gen. 18. 12. Jacob, no doubt would have prevented that Passionate Expression of his beloved Rachel. Give me children, or I die Gen. 30. 1. Would whole Hecatombs of Sacrifices, or Burnt Offerings have made her Fruitful. But the Good Man was so sensible of the contrary, that his Anger was kindled against Rachel, and he Argues with her upon the Principles of Reason and Religion. Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee*

*thee the fruit of the womb? v. 2.*  
As if he had advis'd her to consider who it was that had Dominion over the Store-house of Nature, and to submit with patience, until God should think fit to remember and hearken to her, and *take away her reproach, v. 23.* and she did so.

But not to insist any longer upon such known Truths. Let us suppose yet farther, that God Almighty should vouchsafe to *give us Babes at our desire,* and Issue at our Pleasure, should be pleas'd to furnish our *Table with Children, like Olive Branches,* and to make our *Wives like fruitful vines about our house.* Ps. 128. 3. Yet we know by sad Experience, how soon he can wither the one, and blast the other, how quickly he can by some Violent Contagion, or Melancholly Disaster, sweep away a numerous hope.

hopeful Off-spring; and after fair Overtures of Mercy, in the building of our Families for lasting Generations, can in an instant *cause our name to be quite blotted out, and our place to be no where found.*

There is as great a Power requir'd to Preserve, as to Create, and nothing but a God can perform the latter; and consequently, nothing less can secure the former; and therefore, should God really put it into our Power, to have what issue we thought fit; yet unless we have an *Arm like God*, and can protect and defend like the *Almighty*, we must still be dependant upon his Will and Pleasure, for the supporting of our Name, and the defence of our Family; and if he will not vouchsafe his Favour and Assistance, all our most earnest Care and Endeavours will be to no purpose.

For

For except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. And,

Secondly, As we cannot have, or beget these Pledges of the loving Bed, or keep them when they are begotten towards the building of our House, without God's Blessing and Favour; so neither if we have Children, can we provide Riches, or an Inheritance for them, without his Kindness and Assistance.

*Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, saith our Saviour, Mat. 10. 29. and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your father; implying, that the Providence of God runneth too and fro in the earth, and exerciseth it self in small Concerns, as well as in Matters more Momentous. 'The growth of the 'Lillies, the springing of the Grass, 'the cries of the young Ravens, and 'the moulting of the Sparrows Wing 'is not (saith one) without our Father,*



‘ther, or without his Providence;  
and therefore, we may with good  
Logick, infer *à fortiori*; that if God  
do interest himself in things beneath  
us; he doth not doubtless leave his  
chief Workmanship to be govern’d by  
wild Chance, or to live and act  
without his Guidance and Inspection.  
Which thing being granted, let us  
but then consider, that all that In-  
dustry, that Wit and Ingenuity,  
that Strength and Vigour, which is  
necessary to the raising of our For-  
tunes, or the Support of our Fa-  
mily, are in the Sole Disposal, and  
Regimen of God Almighty, and  
that he can at his Will and Plea-  
sure, recall that Strength, or remand  
those Senses, which he hath thus  
long lent us, and the Proposition is  
without all peradventure sound and  
true. ‘For (as one excellently well  
‘argues) dost thou depend upon the  
‘Work of thy Hands, or the Con-  
‘tri-

‘trivance of thy Thoughts, thy Bo-  
‘dily Strength, or the Labour of  
‘thy Mind? Both these are in the  
‘Power of that God, who formed  
‘the one, and inspired the other,  
‘who by one single Disease, can en-  
‘feeble the Limbs, and blinds  
‘the Understanding; can convert  
‘the most active force into Trembling  
‘and Weakness, and the most excel-  
‘lent Judgment into Frenzy and Do-  
‘tage? Dost thou promise thy self full  
Barns, and expect a large Increase  
by the Crop of thy Fields? ’Tis the  
same God that *gives the former and*  
*the latter rain in its season*, who can  
either open and shut up the Win-  
dows of Heaven at his Pleasure,  
and can *make a fruitful land barren,*  
*for the iniquity of those that dwell*  
*therein*. Dost thou expect the en-  
largement of thy Estate, through  
the number of thy Oxen, or thy  
Sheep, the multitude of thy Flocks,  
and of thy Herds? ’Tis God that  
*makes*

*makes thy oxen strong to labour, that  
 makes thy sheep bring forth thousands, and  
 ten thousands, and by the same Power,  
 can in an instant send a Murrain  
 amongst the former, and rot and  
 consume the latter, and make us  
 thereby hear nothing but complaining in  
 our Streets. Is it thy Trade, or  
 greatness of thy Traffick, thy Calling,  
 or Employ, that is to advance thy  
 Estate? God can either by mis-  
 apprehensions on one hand, or by  
 laying open the real Faults of the  
 other, cause even thy Lovers, and thy  
 Friends to stand afar off from thee, and  
 thine Acquaintance to keep out of thy sight.*  
*‘Dost thou go down to the Sea  
 ‘in Ships, and Occupy thy Business  
 ‘in great Waters? Even there God  
 ‘is the Pilot, and thou may’st see  
 ‘his wonders in the deep; the stormy  
 ‘winds are at his Command, and  
 ‘thou in vain hopest for Success,  
 ‘unless he deliver thee from the  
 ‘Rage of the Deep, and bring thee*

to the Haven where thou wouldst be,  
in a Word, by whatever Means, or  
Methods thou proposhest the en-  
larging of thy Substance, 'tis the As-  
sistance of Heaven alone, can make  
thee Prosperous, and without that,  
thou canst no more add one grain  
to thy Estate, than thou canst a  
Cubit to thy Stature. But than far-  
ther, if we swim in Plenty, and  
rowl in the Affluence of all good  
Things, if our Barns be full of all  
manner of store, and our Bags pant  
by being overcharg'd, if we have  
Lands call'd after our own Names, and  
do really leave a large Substance to  
our Babes, yet 'tis no more in our  
Power to perpetuate this, even for  
one Generation, than 'tis in our  
Breasts to have babes at our desire.  
For does not every day's Experience  
tell us, that Riches are not for ever,  
and that tho' we heap them up, yet  
we cannot tell who shall gather them.

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I have

I have heard and read indeed of some who have vainly, not to say Atheistically boasted, that their Providence should secure their Children from ever being beholden to other Persons ; but *O generation of vipers, who hath warned them thus to fly from the wrath to come ?* For alas, have we not oft seen Men as good as the best of us, who to day have swam in Affluence and Plenty, and to morrow have sat with Scorn and Disgrace upon a Dunghil. Have we not seen large Revenues suddenly decay, through some fatal Moth or Rust ? Have we not seen those *Children Fatherless*, and those *Wives Widows*, and the *Oppressour spoiling all their Goods*, who erewhile could *boast in the multitude of their Riches ?* Nay, have we not seen those Children begging their Bread, and seeking it in desolate Places, whose Parents not long before

fore would have disdain'd to have  
set those who reliev'd them *amongst*  
*the Dogs of their Flock?* And shall  
we then run Counter to the Expe-  
rience of all Ages, and pretend to  
be so great Masters of this Worlds  
Goods, as to secure our selves and  
Children a lasting Estate, tho' Hea-  
ven it self interpose; no, if ever we  
intend to sail with safety through  
the Port of this lower Orb, and  
that our Children, and their fol-  
lowing Generations after us, shall  
stem the torrent of this fickle tur-  
bulent World; we must engage the  
Good Providence of God on our  
side, and make the great Architect  
of Heaven and Earth our Friend.  
For *except he build the house, they la-*  
*bour in vain that build it.* And let  
this suffice briefly to evince the  
Truth of this Proposition, which  
I rais'd from the Text, viz. That  
the Wisest and most Industrious



Attempts towards the raising or building of a Family, cannot prosper or succeed without the peculiar Blessing and Assistance of Heaven.

I shall now proceed to draw some Practical Inferences, from what has been said, and so I shall conclude. And,

*First, Art thou fruitless as, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Hannah, for some time were, put up thy earnest Petitions unto God as they did, that he will be pleas'd to grant thee the fruit of thy Request, that he will bless thee with increase, and grant thee thy hearts desire, and fulfil all thy mind, that he will cause the barren to bear seven, and make thee a joyful mother of children.*

When Hannah wanted a Son to take off her Reproach, she cryed unto the Lord in her trouble, and earnestly supplicated the God of Jacob, and he gave her Samuel, that great Prophet,

phet, and thereby delivered her out of her Distress. When *Abraham* was Childless, and *Isaac's* Wife Barren, they flew to Heaven with the Wings of Ardent Devotion, and would not suffer the *Almighty* to be at quiet, until he had granted them the petition of their lips; they would give no sleep to their eyes, nor slumber to their eye-lids, until they had storm'd Heaven by Violence, and brought a Blessing away by force. Lo children, and the fruit of the womb, are a gift, and every good and perfect gift is from above; and therefore, if ever we intend to have Children (especially such as shall be a Blessing to us) we must Pray, and that earnestly too, that God give us the Blessing of Increase. But then if he vouchsafe still to withhold his Influence and Assistance, let us not repine at his Dispensations, but consider that he knows what is better for us, than

we do our selves. Consider how many Children have been a Curse to their Parents, and have caused their *gray hairs to go down with sorrow to the grave*; how often they have wasted and squander'd away that Estate in a moment, in Rioting and Drunkenness, which hath been the Product of many Years, sweat and toyl, and labour of the Careful Father, and his no less thirfty Consort. Consider what Sorrow it is to bring forth a *Son of Perdition*, or a *Daughter that causeth shame*, and how much better is it to have no Issue, than to have such as shall be a Dishonour to God, and a Reproach to their Family, shall serve only to fill up the number of the Damned, and cause our *names to stink in the nostrils of Israel*. But above all, consider, that if God withhold this great Blessing from us, and will not perpetuate our Mem-

ry by these little Models of our selves, yet he hath promised, that if we chuse the things which please him, he will give us a name better than of sons and of daughters, he will give us an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. II. 56. 4. 5. But

Secondly, Hath God Blessed thee with Children, be always mindful to praise him for those Mercies, and to this end, consider, that this is one of the most Inestimable Blessings of God: A Blessing, which he hath always promis'd to those who were his chief Friends and Favourites. *In blessing, I will bless thee, and in multiplying, I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore;* says God Almighty to his Faithful Servant Abraham. Gen. 22. 17. And to David, a man after God's own heart, the greatest Favour which he could possibly shew him, was compris'd in that

T 4

Promise.

Promise. Ps. 132. 11, 12. *The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David, he will not turn from it, of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.* Let us then be ever thankful for that which God himself esteems his choicest Blessing, and let us not as some do, look upon our Children as a Bill of Charges, when God hath reckoned them as the Richest part of our Inventory; but let us assure our selves, that we can never set value enough upon that unprized Treasure of the Chast Bed, nor never be thankful enough for those Excellent, tho' common Blessings of God Almighty. But then,

*Thirdly,* If we intend that they shall prove Blessings to us, let us take special care to bring them up in the nurture and fear of the Lord. *Train up a child in the way thou wouldst have him to go, and when he is old he will*

will not depart from it; let us therefore season their Youth with wholesome Instructions, and Pious Exhortations; nay, let us teach them even before they can well speak to prattle of God and Goodness, and as they grow in Years, let us endeavour all we can, that they may grow in Grace, and spiritual Understanding; and to this end, let us not fail to put up our daily Petitions to God in their behalf, that he will be pleas'd to enlighten their understanding, that they may know him, and lead them into the way of truth, and the paths of salvation; to promote which, let us above all, encourage them in the Ways of Holiness, by our own good Example, and shew them that we are in earnest, when we advise them to be Vertuous and Religious. For as we cannot reasonably hope that God will bless the Seed of the Profligate



gate and Prophane; so indeed we cannot believe that our Children shall either be Chast, or Temperate, or Religious, when they see us full of Uncleanneſs, given to Debauchery and Exceſs, and can ſcarce diſcern that we have ſo much as the *form of Godlineſs* about us. There are ſome Diſeaſes of the Body, which are Hereditary, and it too often proves, that thoſe of the Mind, Will and Affections are ſo too; let us not however, add the Improvement of our Wicked Example, to make the ſtem more proliſick in Vice than the ſtock. But wouldſt thou have thy Son Reverence an Oath, let not his Ears be grated with thy Prophane Babble, nor by thy Evil Example, teach him to Swear by his Maker, before he knows what God is. Wouldſt thou have thy Daughters Chast? Let not thy Wanton Sal-

lies add Wings to their Lasciviousness, or thy Lewd Talk, encourage them to loose Embraces. Wouldst thou have thy Child *Just in all his Ways, and Righteous in all his Works*? Never teach him the Artifice and Cunning of *False Weights and Deceitful Measures*; never train him up in the Cant of thy over-reaching Tongue, or suffer him to be acquainted with thy Crafty Tricks; But let the Measures of thy Justice and Sobriety, be the Rule and Guide of his Youth, and let thy Honest Simplicity season his Younger Years; and do not think that thou hast done enough, or made a good Provision for him, when thou hast taught him Cunning and Policy, or Instructed him how to manage his Trade or Employment with Craft and Subtilty; but be sure to Imprint on his Mind, the Rules of Vertue, and the Principles of Religion,

ligion, and Rivet them there by thine own Pious Example. For this shall be of much greater advantage to him, than the increasing of his Oyl, or Wine, and shall be a sure means to establish thy Family, if not in Riches, yet in Prosperity and Happiness, and to make thee become a Benefactor, as well as a Parent, even to remote Successions. Which leads me to the last Observation which I shall make from what hath been said. That if we intend,

*Fourthly,* To perpetuate our Name and Estate to future Generations, we must our selves be Holy and Religious. 'Tis not enough that our Children are so, for God often visits the iniquity of the Father upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation, of them that hate him. So that Wicked Parents entail a Curse upon succeeding Generations, and in-

instead of Building, or of Supporting a Family, undermine the Foundation. But a good man layeth up an inheritance for his childrens children, and by his Vertue and Piety, watereth Posterity it self, and makes it fruitful. Blessed is that man that feareth the Lord, and delighteth greatly in his commandments, his seed shall be mighty upon earth, the generation of the upright shall be blessed; wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endureth for ever. Ps. 112. 1, 2, 3. So that here we have a most sure Word of Prophecy, a never failing Remedy to secure our Estate from any Languishing Distemper. Let us but fear God, and this will make our Family Flourish, and our Posterity Rich; this will entail the greatest Abundance, and Confluence of Earthly Felicities, not only on our own Persons, but on our Progeny; this will settle our Off-

Off-spring under the Happy Influence of our *Vine*, and make our *Fig-tree flourish* in future Ages. But as for the *ungodly*, they are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind bloweth away, and scattereth abroad upon the face of the earth. All their Wise Counsels, and large Designs shall sink in a moment, and within a little while thou shalt seek his place, and it shall no where be found. It is a Grave, I had almost said a Divine Observation of the Poet. *De male quæsitis vix gaudet tertius Heres*, that the third Heir has seldom cause to boast of an Estate unjustly gotten, the Curse of God goes along with it, and a secret Moth Eats and Corrodes it of a sudden, and to confirm the Truth of this, we have the Mouth of God himself, by his Prophet Mica: 2. 1, 2, 3. *Wo to them that devise iniquity, &c. They covet fields, and take them by violence,*  
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and houses, and take them away, so they oppress a man, a man and his house, even a man and his heritage; therefore, thus saith the Lord, behold against this family, I devise an evil; It is not against this Man, but against this family I devise an evil; implying, that the child shall bear the iniquity of his father, and shall see his Estate moulder away, not for his own, but for the fault of his Progenitors. But that which is most remarkable in this place of Scripture, is this, that the Word Evil [I will devise an Evil] רשע is the very same with the Original, v. 1. intimating, a Relation in the same kind, viz. that the Son shall suffer after the same manner, that the Father hath made others do so. So that as the Father hath taken away other Men's Estates by Violence and Extortion, by Fraud or Oppression, his Iniquity shall reach beyond the Grave, and his Children shall suffer in that very kind, that he



he hath made other Men's Children for to suffer, or as the same *Prophet* expresseth it, *ch. 1. 7. the wages of a whore shall return to the hire of an harlot.* And this methinks, should be a mighty strong Motive to induce us, not to *build our house upon such a sandy Foundation.* He is an ill Architect, that erects but for 20, or 30, or 40 Years continuance, and he is a much worse, that sets Fire upon his House in the building of it, and yet alas, all Men do this, who found it upon Fraud and Rapine, the least pittance of an Estate so got, being like the Sacrifice which the Eagle stole from the Altar, carrying a Firebrand along with it, which instead of nourishing, will destroy the Brood and their Habitation; oh, let us then be Wise to our Selves, and to our Posterity; or if we be regardless of our Selves, our Souls

and

and our Bodies; yet let us so far pity those dear Pledges of Matrimonial Affection, as not to leave a Curse, instead of a Blessing behind us; but let us at least for the sake of our Off-spring be Religious. 'Tis our Saviours Observation, that if our children ask us bread, we do not give them a stone, or if they ask us a fish, we do not give them a serpent; and therefore, when we make them glad with the Apprehensions of our leaving them a *Goodly Inheritance*, let us not so far gull and cheat them, as to leave them only the Shadow, instead of the Substance, or at least that which will soon dwindle into Shade and Nothingness. But let us be so just to our poor Infant Race, as to engage Heaven on their side, by the Wages of *Righteousness*, and true *Holiness*, and let us build our *House* upon the two great Pillars of Truth and Justice, and then the

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Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it ; whereas, if we go about to found the growing hopes of a Family upon Violence, or Oppression, False Weights, or Deceitful Measures, Craft, Subtilty, or Undermining ; nay, if we by such Methods as these, not only lay a Basis, but erect our House to a considerable height ; this is not to be Wise to our Selves, or Friends, much less Parents to our Issue ; for by such Practices as these, we engage Heaven it self against us and our Posterity ; who can in an instant scatter the largest Revenue, and in a moment by unknown ways, can sink the largest Estate into nothing, for if God be against us, the vain hopes of *calling our Lands after our own Name*, will soon vanish, and within a very little while, there will be no Means left, to know that we had a Name upon the Earth,

but

but the greatness of our Ruine, or the cursed Memory of our Oppressions. But the generation of the righteous shall be blessed, and his seed shall be mighty upon the earth: His Virtue shall be Recorded in the Annals of Fame, and his Memorial throughout all Generations. He being dead, shall speak in his Posterity, and his name shall be had in everlasting remembrance. The Lord, the Lord of Hosts shall support his house, and the Almighty God of Jacob, shall be his lot, and his portion for ever.

I shall conclude all with those Promises, and those Threats which we find Recorded in the 28 Chap. of Deut. It shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and do all his commandments, &c. All these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, &c. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou

be in the field, blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out. i. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. The Lord shall command a blessing upon thee in thy store-houses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto. v. 8. And the Lord shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground; the Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land, in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand. v. 11. 12. But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments, and his statutes; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee. Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou

thou be in the field, cursed shall be thy basket and thy store, cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out. v. 15. 16, 17, 18, 19. Thou shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her, thou shalt build an house, and thou shalt not dwell therein. v. 30. Thy sons and thy daughters shall be given unto another people. 32. Thou shalt beget sons and daughters, but thou shalt not enjoy them. v. 41. These are part of that Catalogue of Blessings and Curses, which the Lord propos'd to his Chosen People Israel, as the Reward of their Obedience, or Disobedience, and they are of Eternal Verity; and therefore, if we intend to avoid the heavy Wrath of God on one hand, and to secure this Almighty Power on our side on the



other ; we must *hearken diligently to the voice of the Lord our God, to observe and to do all his commandments ;* so will he not only bless us in our Persons, and in our Estates, in our Basket, and in our Store, but he will build us an House, which shall be lasting and unshaken for many Generations, and *our children shall sit upon our seat for evermore.* Which God of his Infinite Mercy, grant, &c.

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 PROVERBS XXVII. v. 1st.

*Boast not thy self of to morrow ; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.*

**S**uch is the Unstable Condition, not only of Man, but of all Sublunary Beings, that what we see to day, is rarely, if at all to be found in the same position to morrow ; and what was yesterday in it's bloom or shine, is to day benighted with an Eclipse, or threaten'd with a speedy Declension. So that indeed should we take a strict scrutiny of the several Stages of Man, and the things about him, we might read daily Lectures of the Instability of their Condition, and at once

view the Vanity, and uncertain State of all Created Beings.

And yet alas, such is our Short-sightedness, such our Folly, that notwithstanding our own moving posture, and the slipperiness of all our trifling Enjoyments, we build Castles of Assurance, and buoy up our selves with the vain hopes that *we shall never be removed; but that to morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundantly, that we our selves shall continue for many years in this land of the living, and that our houses shall be called after our own names, and our posterity praise our sayings throughout many generations.* Now, how vain and trifling such a Position as this is, cannot but appear to every Thinking Man. For when I consider, that *the breath of man is in his nostrils, and that his time passeth away like a shadow, and that there is no abiding; that there is an appointed time*

to man on earth, and that his days are like the days of an hireling; what can I infer less, than that; I also must go the way of all the earth, and be brought to the house appointed for all living? When I daily see the sudden surprize, and fatal strokes, which seize Men when they no whit suspect those approaching Pangs, and how against all expectation, Death lays his Hands upon those who are Singing a *Requiem* to their Souls, and are hugging themselves with the soft Expressions of *Peace, Peace*, I cannot but think my self in a tottering condition, and often reflect, that tho' I be now healthful, and strong, yet for all I know, I may be the next, for whom the *Mourners* may go about the Streets. When I read of the several Changes and Resolutions, that are made in States and Kingdoms, and the sad Destructions of Nations and Coun-

Countrys ; when I see many Flourishing Families come to Decay, and Men of vast Estates sink into Poverty and Disgrace ; I cannot but view my largest Plat of Ground, and my most Plentiful Fortunes, with Contempt and Scorn, and not think that worth my prizing, which perhaps may to *morrow* cease to be mine, or may *this night* be grasped from me by the Arm of Violence, or Oppression. 'Twas doubtless, these, or some such like Reflections as these, that occasion'd the Wise, the Magnificent King *Solomon* in the height of all his Glory, to leave my Text as a standing Rule, to each individual Man. *Boast not thy self of to morrow ; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.* That is, thou who now swimmeſt in Affluence and Plenty, and whose Constitution is Strong and Healthful ; do not too confidently arrogate to thy self a  
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Security in thy present Station, nor  
*boast thy self in the multitude of thy*  
*riches.* Do not condemn others,  
who are not so great as thy self,  
nor be thou proud of that which  
is not Permanent and Sure; for  
tis not in thy breast to secure what  
thou now enjoyest, no, not for one  
Minute, nor dost thou know how  
soon thou may'st be constrain'd to  
change places with that Miscreant  
whom thou erewhile despisest. The  
Scene of Affairs may soon be alter'd,  
and thou who to Day Acts the part  
of a Great Man, may to Morrow  
tread the Stage in a Mean, in a  
Sable Dress.

Nor yet, *Secondly*, Do thou who  
hast with a long Security in thy  
Wickedness and Impiety, slept in a  
Serene Acquiescence, whose Con-  
science on one hand, hath not rouz'd  
thee with the dire Reflections of an  
after Reckoning, and whose *long suf-*  
*fering*



fering God on the other hand, hath a long time with patience forbore to smite thee with the arrows of the Almighty. Do not let this, I say, be any Encouragement for thy continuance in Sin, upon the vain hopes of Repenting hereafter, but give glory to the Lord your God, least he cause darkness, and let no opportunity encourage thee to put off thy Repentance from one time to another; no, do not so much as boast thy self of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

These are the several Acceptations, in which these Words are taken; but since both our Ancient and Modern Commentators, make them bear Principally the former Sense: I shall therefore at this time, chiefly treat of them, according to the former Acceptation, yet after such a manner, as shall in some measure include, what is contained

tain'd in the latter. And for our more regular proceeding, I shall insist upon this plain Proposition.

That our present Possession of the good things of this World, is no sure Foundation, upon which we may superstruct the continuance of our Enjoyments. *Boast not thy self of to morrow, &c.*

The Victorious *Sesostris*, King of *Egypt*; having made a Conquest over four Mighty Princes, he caus'd them instead of Horses, to draw his Triumphal Chariot; but one day perceiving one of them frequently to look back, and cast his Eye upon the Wheel; he demanding the reason why he did so, receiv'd this Answer; I cannot said he, amidst all my Misery, but flatter my self with soft and pleasing thoughts, while I observe that part of the Wheel which was just now the lowest, so speedily become the highest, and  
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the highest no less suddenly become the lowest. And indeed, thus it is in all the Enjoyments of this Life; there is nothing permanent or durable, but all things are fix'd upon the Wheel of Fortune, which is perpetually moving round, and changing Scenes in a continued Circle. So that had we to day the Confluence of all Worldly Enjoyments; and did we swim in the full Streams of Delight and Pleasure; did our Stores meet our Desires, or out-go our Wishes, and were our Appetites regal'd to the height of Fancy, or Invention; we should greatly call our Prudence into question; should we *build Tabernacles* here, or ground our Felicity upon that which never *continueth in one stay*.

The *Chaldee Paraphrast*, does constantly take *מחר* to *morrow*, for the day immediately succeeding this; and

and indeed, if we seriously consider how greatly fluctuating the things of this World are; how they move in a constant Ebb and Flow; we may reasonably conjecture, that even to morrow, shall represent a new face of things; making our Pleasures, which now *relish like the Grapes of Lebanon*, as unsavory as the *Wine of Dragons*, and the *Gall of Asps*, and turning our *Valleys of Plenty*, and our *Mountains of Delight*, into a *Sodom*, or *Gomorrha*, an *Admah*, or a *Zeboim*. For do we not often see the Voluptuous Person melting down his Youth in soft Dalliances, Revelling out his Day in Loose Delights, or consuming it in more Loud Debauches; when lo amidst the heat and glee of all his Wild Frolicks, some Malignant Influence unexpectedly blasts his Pleasures, and a dark Night of Sorrow treads upon the heels of all his Mid-day Glory?

Glory? May we not behold the Avaritious Griping Niggards, sit brooding over their Bags, and closely pursuing the Wages of Unrighteousness; may we not see them running greedily after the errour of Balaam for reward, and trusting in their uncertain riches, saying to gold, thou art my hope, and to fine gold, thou art my confidence; whilst in the midst of their greedy Acquests, and their own confiding Thoughts; God sends the Locust, and the Cankerworm, the Caterpillar, and the Palmar-worm, his great army amongst them; and whilst they entertain themselves with the pleasing Thoughts, that they are Rich, and increased with Goods, and have need of nothing, maketh them know that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Have we not known the Ambitious Towing Thoughts of the Proud, brought low in a Moment, and he who to day for Grandeur

deur and Riches had no equal, have we not on the morrow seen his Misery and Contempt beyond a Parallel? Who could have thought but that a *Million of Men*, and as many Ships as could cover the *Hellespont*, should have been guard sufficient against all Assaults, and yet the same day shew'd *Xerxes* the Great Commander of all these, both Fortunate and Miserable. And if we have Recourse to Sacred Story, we may find the Richest, nay, the best Man of the East on a sudden become a *Proverb*, and a *By-word*, for his Poverty and Meanness, and the Man after God's own Heart dispossess'd of his Kingdom, and hunted like a *Partridge*. We may meet with *Cyrus*, after a thirty Years Victory over the *Medes* and *Persians*, Subdued and Conquer'd by one of the Weaker Sex, and lye weltring in his own Gore, by the Hand of

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the *Scythian Queen*; and we may Read of *Belshazzar*, in the very Moment that he is *Carousing of Wine in Consecrated Bowls*, receive the sad Message, that his Kingdom is given to the *Medes and Persians*. To all which, I might add the sudden Overthrow of the Rich *Lydian King*, the Unhappy Downfall of *Vitellus*, that Great Monarch, both of East and West, the Unfortunate and speedy Destruction of *Valerian, Andronicus*, and *Galla*, the utter Extirpation of the *Zelzucciane* Family of *Asia*, or *Palæolgio*, of *Greece*, and the Universal Fate of *Nebuchadnezzar*, *Herod*, and others; but every day presents us with so many Melancholly Notices of the slipperiness of this Worlds Enjoyments, both as to good and bad Men; that there needs no other Illustration of it, but our own sad Experience. That Ambitious Monarch, *Alexander*, was so sensible of this, that when he had subdued the

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Persian, Indians, and greatest part of the Habitable World ; he caus'd a Sword to be Painted within the Circle of a Wheel, signifying thereby, that what he had obtain'd by the Sword, was subject to be turn'd about by the Wheel of Fortune ; and indeed, tho' a Man were Lord of the whole Universe, tho' he could boast himself of being Master of of all that he sees in the Map of the whole World ; yet what Assurance can he have, that the least of all those large Possessions which he enjoys to day, shall be his own to morrow, or that the Arm of another shall not ravish that from him, which his power perhaps hath violently Extorted from another. All Sublunary Enjoyments have of themselves a natural tendency to perish in the using ; for *the fashion of this world passeth away*, and good and evil Fortune, do as naturally suc-

ceed one another, as Day and Night; and if so, 'tis as Rational to expect, that our Blessings will ere long be remov'd out of our sight, as that the Sun will shortly set, tho' we now see it in it's Meridian. But admit we, that we should without any interruption, enjoy that which we at present possess, and that our Fruition would be as durable as our Lives, yet alas, our Lives themselves are at the best but very short, and so very uncertain too, that even in that respect, we have little, very little reason to *boast our selves of to morrow; because we do not know what a day may bring forth.* The Rich Fool had as fair a Prospect, and as ample a Security of Enjoying his *full Barns*, as the best of us can pretend to; and yet we find that in the height of his Security, when he had promis'd to himself Rest and *Ease for many years*, and dream'd of

nothing but a long and serene Acquiescence under his late Plentiful Increase; God sends him an unexpected notice, that he shall be suddenly dispossess'd of what he now seems to secure, and shews him what a Character he deserves for such misplac'd Ostentation. *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee,* Luke 12. 20. And indeed would the time give me leave, I might shew you, that whether we consider the Nature of our Enjoyments, or of our Selves; that *the things* of this World are as *fleeting* as a Cloud, and that *our life is even as a vapour*; that whether we consult the Experience of all Ages, or reflect upon those several Changes of Fortune, which have attended the Greatest, the Wisest, the Richest, and the best of Mankind; that whether we look up to God as the Absolute Disposer of whatever we at any

time call our own ; and that if he *blow upon us with the breath of his displeasure*, we are blasted, and come to a fearful end ; or whether we consider that he delighteth in nothing more than in *bringing the counsel of the wicked to nought*, and in *making the devices of the sinner of none effect*. I might from all these Considerations, shew you the Folly of those, who like the aforementioned *Rich Fool*, place their Confidence upon their Earthly Enjoyments, and Remark to you from them all ; that they who spend their time in acquiring the good, or great things of this World, or solace themselves with the pleasing Reflections that they have *acquir'd them* ; have, as the Prophet speaks, *sown wheat, but shall reap thorns*, and *have put themselves to pain, but shall not profit*. Jer. 12. 13. For the best of our Earthly Possessions have nothing of firm-

firmness, or stability in them, but either slip thro' our Fingers e'er we have well laid hold of them, or if we have (as we think) made a full seizure; Death oft-times very suddenly puts a Period both to our Enjoyments, and our Lives, and leaves us as standing Precedents upon Record; that no Man ought to *boast himself of to morrow; because he knoweth not what a day may bring forth.* But the very naming of these things, together with the Melancholly Instances and Considerations, which I have already produc'd, may, I think, sufficiently evince the Truth of the Proposition which I propos'd to speak too, viz. That our present possession of the good things of this World, is no sure Foundation, upon which we may superstruct the continuance of our Enjoyments; and therefore I shall insist no farther in the Proof of it; but shall proceed



to draw some Inferences, by way of Application. And,

*First*, Are our Enjoyments uncertain? Then this may teach us not to set our Hearts too much upon them.

The Learned *Bochart* tells us out of *Chrysippus*; that when a Racer dream'd he was turn'd into an Eagle, an Interpreter gave him this Satisfactory Account from it; *viciſti, iſtâ enim ave volat nulla velocius*; thou haſt conquer'd; for no Bird can come in competition for ſwiftness with that thou dreamſt of; and *Rabbi Solomon* was of opinion, that an Eagle went one hundred and twenty Miles in an Hour; but be that ſo or not, the Holy Scripture doth in ſeveral Places Expreſs the Swifteſt Motion by that of Eagles. 2 *Sam.* 1. 2, 3. *Lam.* 4. 19. *Hab.* 1. 8. And yet when the Wiſe Men would Arraign the

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Proceedings of those who were greedy of filthy Lucre, and trusted in uncertain Riches ; he thought he could not do it by a more apposit, or fit simile than that we meet with. Prov. 23. v. 5. *Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not ? For Riches certainly make themselves wings, they flee away as an eagle towards heaven. i. e.* How Indiscreet is it for any Man eagerly to pursue that, which perhaps with his utmost Care and Diligence, he shall never acquire, or if acquir'd, is of so volatile a Nature, that it may in a trice leave him as bare and naked as he was before. For what is there that can give us any competent Assurance, that what we now have in Possession, shall not in a moment take Wing, and fly to some other Station ? Or how can we reasonably believe, that what we enjoy shall be for ever ours ; when we see eve-

ry thing about us in a moving posture? Did we indeed claim under the Absolute Promise of God, or were the good things which we at present enjoy, intail'd upon us by such a sure Tenure, that we could neither forfeit our Right, nor they suffer a Decay; this would be some tolerable ground, whereon to build our Confidence; but alas, so slender a Title have we to either of these, that our firmest Condition is but like a piece of *Clock-work*; which altho' it may indeed be regular at present, would, were it let alone, wear it self out of order; or however, if by it's own Frame, it promise to be of a long Duration, yet let but the Great *Architect* withdraw the smallest Pin in it, and it will suffer such a Discomposure, as will unhinge the whole Machine, and make it fall into Disorder and Confusion. The greatest States, tho' they have

have *Bodies of Iron, and Legs of Brass,* stand only upon *Feet of Clay,* which moulder away in an Instant. The four Great Monarchies of the World, have been long since by the Hand of Providence, buried in their own Rubbish, and how can we then think that our narrow Fortunes can withstand the shock of the Almighty? *Hast thou an arm like God, or canst thou thunder with a voice like him;* was a Question put by God himself, to his Upright Servant *Job,* intimating thereby his Great Sovereignty on one hand, and his Irresistable Strength on the other; and that as his Ways are equal, so his Power is such, that neither *Behemoth, nor Leviathan,* can withstand his arm, or resist his right arm. 'Tis true indeed, God doth not always in Anger withdraw his Temporal Blessings, but sometimes thro' Kindness, and Paternal Affection, reduceth

ceth Just Persons from a Plentiful Fortune, to a Scanty Condition, and his Rods are the Visitation of his Mercy, but yet even this instructs us to be the more humble under our large Enjoyments, and is a sufficient Lesson to inform us, that tho' at present our Vertues run *adequate* with our Fortunes, yet the largeness of the former cannot ensure the continuance of the latter, but that sometimes God Acts by unaccountable Measures; and that therefore it becomes us, not to set our Hearts upon any thing, tho' never so Gay, Lofty, or Great, because if God think fit to *hide his face*, tho' *our Hill were never so strong*, we should in an instant be *troubled*, and sore *vexed*, and the ready means to make him do so, is to *make gold our hope*, and to *say unto fine gold thou art our confidence*, to *rejoyce because our wealth is great*, and *because our hand hath*

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*gotten much.* Job 31. 24, 25. Whereas, if we intend that God shall go on to bless us, and to continue his favours to us, we must lay aside all Carnal Security, and *trust only in the name of the Lord, and stay upon our God.* We must not *confide in uncertain riches, but in the living God,* and with Prudence, Thankfulness, and Moderation, make use of those good things, which beyond our Expectations and our Merits, God hath Graciously, and in great Bounty dispens'd to us, Which leads me to a second Inference, deducible from the Premises, *viz.* That since our Enjoyments are uncertain, we ought to make a right use of them whilst we have them.

And indeed, this is the Fatherly Design of Providence, in dispensing to us the good things of this Life, that we so Prudently Manage them, as to make them in some mea-



measure Instrumental to us towards our obtaining of a better.

When the *Lord* Communicated his *Talents* to his several Servants, he did it not with a design that they should *bury them* in one hand, or idly squander them away on the other, but that they should Traffick, and shew their Sedulous Care and Diligence in a due Improvement. And when God Almighty thinks fit to Exert the Rays of his Blessings, and place us in the Sun-shine of his Bounty; we are Intrusted but as the Stewards and Deputies of the Almighty, as Persons who must one Day give an Account of our Stewardship, and be Rewarded either with a Joyful *Euge*, or a *go ye Cursed*. And therefore, since we are not properly our own Masters, but must at last be accountable to one Supreme and Universal Lord; we shall not only be Unfaithful to our Trust, but

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Enemies to our selves, if we employ it not to search Wise Purposes, as our Great Master Directs. For, hath God been pleas'd to bless thee with a Large Revenue, or a very Plentiful Estate; 'tis easie to conjecture what Returns he expects from thee. Not the Expending of it in *Rioting and Drunkenness, in Chambering, or Wantonness, in Strife, or Envy*, not the laying of it out to gratifie thy Luxurious Appetite, or to indulge thy self in the Pleasures of the Flesh, but in Acts of Charity and Humanity, the Relieving of the Poor and Needy, the wiping away the Tears of the Orphan, and the Defence of the Widow, and the Oppressed; and indeed would we be but so true to our Interest, as to consider that we are at the utmost but Tenants for Life, and that all the Surplusage of our Estates, but what our Natural Necessities, and  
the

the Decency of our Rank and Station, and the Competent Provision for our Family requires, is like an Annual, or daily Rent-charge upon our Estates, and that the Wise and Just Management of it here, can only give us Title to our Everlasting Inheritance in Reversion; would we but bethink our selves, that what we now have shall not long continue ours, but that we must very shortly leave it to we know not whom; that the only things which will follow us into the next World, are the good and bad Actions which we have commenc'd in this; that what we enjoy to day, may together with our Souls, be this *night required at our hands*; such Thoughts as these would make us Industriously Careful, to manage our *Talent* with Prudence, and Wisely to Husband our Transitory Estate, that we may thereby engage our *great Lord to com-*  
*mit*

mit to our trust the true riches. But then, Thirdly,

Have we for a long Tract of Time been kept steady in our Fortunes, let us attribute it to the peculiar Favour of God, and not to our own Wise Conduct, much less to the Nature of the Things themselves.

There is nothing more common, than for Men to *sacrifice to their own net; and burn incense unto their drag; because by them (as they think) their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous.* Hab. i. 16. *i. e.* They depend upon Second Causes, and forget that the *Lord is their Shepherd*, they overlook the Protection of Providence, and the Provision of the Almighty; whereas, should he withdraw his Influence but for a moment, 'tis utterly impossible for us to Subsist, or receive any Comfort or Advantage from those Things

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which

which we Plentifully enjoy'd just before. All Created Beings are at his Nod, and let him but say the Word, and his single *Fiat* shall reduce the World to it's first *Chaos*, how much more any Individual Member of it into *Tribulation* and a *Curse*? Let but God *whet his glittering sword*, or his hand take hold of judgment, Deut. 32. 41. Let him but open his armoury, and bring forth the weapons of his indignation, Jer. 50. 15. and the proudest *Nimrods* shall exceedingly fear and quake, and the whole Strength of the Wicked be Converted into *Trembling* and *Weakness*. Let but him withhold his Protecting Hand, and all our Enjoyments will immediately vanish into Smoke and Nothingness, and our best Satisfaction sink into Trouble and Anxiety. What reason then have we to fancy that God hath made *our Hill* so strong, as  
that

that we can never be removed? Or why should we foolishly hug our selves with the Apprehension that our Arm, or Strength hath secured to us what we have so long Enjoy'd? Have we not seen Men as great, nay, much greater, and perhaps much better than our selves, remov'd from Peace and Plenty, into a Land of Scarcity and Trouble, forc'd to seek their bread in desolate places, and the oppressour devouring all their substance. Ps. 109. 10. 11. And therefore if our Enjoyments have been of any continuance, let us Attribute our Blessings to the alone Mercy and Protecting Hand of God; and let us be always willing to acknowledge, that 'tis through his Gracious Vouchsafement that we Enjoy the least Mercy, least by our depending upon the Sandy Foundation of our own Wit and Power; we constrain God to vindicate his



Honour, by withdrawing his Protection, and provoke him to deprive us of his Blessings for no other reason, but that he may thereby give a Specimen to the World, that 'tis he *alone which feed us all our life long unto this day*, Gen. 48. 1. and that what we formerly did, or do at present Enjoy, has been graciously dispens'd and continued to us *by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob*. Gen. 49. 24. And therefore,

*Fourthly*, What has been said, may engage us not to contemn those who move in a lower Sphere, because perhaps to morrow may change the Scene of Affairs, and cause us to shift places with them.

'Twas the Observation of the Wisest of Men. *Eccl. 4. 14. That the poor cometh out of prison to reign; whereas, he that is born in his kingdom becometh poor.* And indeed, every Days Experience tells

us,

us, that *Riches are not for ever*, and Honour but for a Moment. And therefore, since we have nothing but what we have receiv'd, and that 'tis God alone which made us differ from our Brother. What reason have we to swell with the Vain Conceit of our own Greatness, and look down with Hatred and Contempt upon those which are beneath us? God is Debter to no Man, neither does he stand oblig'd to confer his Gifts upon *this*, rather than *that* Person; and therefore, since *every good and perfect gift cometh from above, and is dispens'd* by the Omnipotent Hand of our Universal Father; what great Folly is it to despise our Brother, because he is crush'd upon the Wheel of Fortune, or reduc'd to a piece of Bread? Ought we not rather to consider, that God alone is the Great Proprietor of the World; and has on-

ly lent us what we at present Enjoy; and can when he pleaseth recall the Grant, and dispense his Bounty to the Poorest Object which now wanders about the Street; can pour down the Showers of his Blessings upon that Needy Person, which lies now clad with Meanness and Disgrace, and set him amongst princes, even amongst the kings of the earth. Is it not our greatest Prudence to consider, that we who to Day are blest in a fair and flourishing Estate, may to Morrow be in the Condition of that Poor Wretch, whom we now despise? We who to Day Enjoy the Wealth of Job, may (as one excellently expresseth it) to Morrow need his Patience, and therefore (as he goes on) with what reason can we Judge our Cause much different from that of the Poorest Person, when as in a trice we may per-  
haps

En- 'haps change places, when the Scene  
h re- 'turning, he may be advanc'd into  
oun- 'the Possession of our Riches, and  
hich 'we cramp'd with the Lean Reve-  
can 'nues of his Disregarded Poverty.  
Blef- But however, admit that we should  
nich quietly Enjoy what we at present  
and Possess thro' the whole Tract of  
rin- our Lives, yet when Death comes,  
tha we shall all stand upon an equal  
ru- Level; for *riches profit not in the day*  
to *of wrath*, nor shall we have the  
u- more respect shewn us in the next  
ce World, for having been more con-  
or siderable than our Brother in this;  
? and therefore as the *Apostle* says,  
h *Rom. 14. 10. Why dost thou judge thy*  
y *brother, or why dost thou set at nought*  
s *thy brother; we shall all stand before*  
s *the judgment seat of Christ*, where there  
e will be no difference made betwixt  
t us, but what shall be grounded up-  
on Conscience and Religion; where  
Virtuous Actions alone shall cause

the Preference, and whatever Disproportion there may have seemingly been in our Estates in this World, 'tis our good Improvement of what we have had, that shall give us the Precedence in the next. Let us then be always mindful, that he whom we so little regard, is our Fellow-servant, and that the Goodness of God, and not our own Merits, made the difference betwixt us; that however little he may seem in our Eye, God looketh upon him as more valuable, if more Virtuous, and can if he pleaseth immediately set him in a Class above us, but if for Great and Wise Reasons, he think fit to continue him in a Scanty Poor Condition, he shall be our Equal at the Great Day of Account, and perhaps much more Glorious, and more Happy in the next World.

*Fifthly,*

*Fifthly*, Are we unaccountably reduced from a Plentiful Fortune, into a Necessitous Condition; let us not be dejected at so sudden a Change. We know who it is that sits at the Stern, and Governs and Regulates the whole Series of Worldly Affairs, and if we were Thinking Men, we could not but be often mindful upon what slippery ground we stood, and how that besides the Vanity of all Created Beings, God often suddenly turns the Scene of Merriment and Jollity into that of Sorrow and Complaint, and when we are Caressing in full Bowls, and stretching our selves upon our Ivory Beds, makes us thro' some unexpected Turn of Fortune, wash our bed, and water our couch with our tears, gives us the bread of adversity, and mingles our drink with weeping. Now since this is incident to every Son of Adam, and we are naturally liable



ble as Inhabitants of the World to a sudden Change of Fortune, it becomes us as Wise Men to be like *Aristotles* Cube, so exactly squar'd, that upon every turn we fall upon a steady Basis, and be unalterable in our Temper, tho' we be Variable in our Fortunes. There is no Condition but will bespeak us Happy, if we think fit, and unless our Minds be rightly prepar'd and fitted for it, even the greatest Estate is too little. God may if he pleaseth increase our Desires as he doth our Revenues, and possess us with such a Boulomy, and thirst after more, that the Increasing our Rental shall make us the less Rich, and the more our Estate is enlarg'd, the more shall our Rapacious Appetite be so too; and he who sees one Mannour added to another, shall like an Hydropick Person, have a greater Thirst for having drunk himself

self full. Whereas he whose desires are limited not by his Acres of Ground, but by the settled Laws of Acquiescence in his Maker, 'tis the same to him, whether he have little or much, and matters not whether *the Lord give, or take away*. His Happiness consists not in the outward Appendages of his Fortune, but in the Retirement of his Thoughts, which can no more be ruffled, or disorder'd by any cross Accident, or the Diminution of his Estate, than a *Soul* can be pierc'd by a Bullet, or a *Seraphim* by Thunder. And therefore it would doubtless be of very great Advantage to us to Endeavour to Possess our Souls with such a Degree of Patience and Resignation, as shall make us overlook the Cross Accidents of the World, and not to Fret and Repine, tho' Trouble *like an Armed Man* should press in upon us; but  
be

be seriously mindful, that 'twas but just as we had reason to suspect, for that as every Day may change the Face of Things, so we know not but our Sun may this Day hide it's Head, or to *Morrow* may set in a Cloud. But however, let us be always mindful, that at the best our Enjoyments here cannot be of any long continuance, for *we brought nothing into this world, and 'tis certain we shall carry nothing out,* and therefore since *we have here no abiding City,* but are uncertain how soon that great Change will come upon us, this should arm us methinks against the Surprise of any Cross Events, because though our Goods should be unexpectedly cast over-board, yet these crazy Vessels of ours may suddenly, but cannot at the utmost be very long before they follow their Cargo. Which leads me to the  
last

last Consideration; which I shall at this time offer, viz.

*Sixthly*, Are our Lives as uncertain as our Enjoyments, this should make us Prudently Manage our Time, as well as our Estates.

There is no Saying more usual in the Mouths of Men, than that *they do not know how to spend their time*. But alas, he that considers what a great Work he has upon his Hands, and that he is chiefly sent into this World to dress and prepare himself for another, cannot but *pass his sojourning here with fear and trembling*, and think that the Evening of his Age draws on apace, and therefore will be sure to Work whilst it is Day, lest the Night of Everlasting Darkness should overtake him, in which no Man can Work. The Wise *Cato* Professed that he had so seriously repented of nothing, as that he had squander'd away

away one hour without Advantage to himself or others ; and certainly if an Heathen who walk'd only by the Delight of Nature, could thus seriously complain of the loss of one hour ; we Christians, who have greater hopes, and business of such very great importance, have reason to bewail our Wilful Neglect of those Precious Minutes, wherewith we have been Entrusted. But however, we now seem affected with our Negligence and Supineness, the time will surely once come, *viz.* At the Hour of Death, when we shall sadly lament our Idleness, and our Folly, when we should be willing (were it possible) to call back some part of our Mis-spent Time, at the Expence of all that we are worth. For what would not a Man give, who sees himself at the brink of Eternity, who is just entring upon the Confines of an Everlasting State,

State, and hears the *Bride-groom* at the *Door*, Summoning him to the *Wedding of the Lamb*, what would he not give to recall that Time, and live those Precious Hours over again, which he vainly wasted, and which ought to have been employ'd in the *Trimming of his Lamp*, and making ready his *Wedding Garment*? Now, this is really the Case of every one of us; that of *that day and hour we are utterly uncertain*; for *who knows the time of his coming*? Who knows whether at *Midnight*, or at *Morn*, or at *Cock-crow*, he shall receive his last Summons? Who amongst us all dare be so bold as to say he shall live till to *Morrow*, or confidently assever that he shall continue some Days more upon Earth? May not the Preacher, together with his whole Auditory, be call'd even from this place, to the Tribunal of God? And if it should



should so happen (as God only knows whether it will or no) should not many of us importunately wish for some few Hours of Reprieve? And therefore, how becoming is it for us to be every Hour Wisely Employ'd, least it should prove our last, and Prudently to Manage every Day, least to *Morrow* should not be ours. When *Saul*, that Stout Champion of *Israel*, receiv'd the Melancholly notice, that he should by to *Morrow* that-time become close Prisoner to his Grave; the Light of *Israel* grew Dim, and the Conduct and Bravery of that great Commander glided away as in a Moment, and *there was no manner of Spirit left in him*. The Great *Belshazzar's Mene Tekel Uphrasin*, is enough to Ruffle and Discompose the Spirit of a King, and to render the Actions of the Greatest Prince Weak and Inept. And were God  
pleased

pleased to suffer us to look into the Dark Archives of his Providence, and there Communicate to us, that our Life was just come to it's last Period, and that there was but a very few Minutes betwixt us and the Horizon of Eternity; how much would it startle us into Anxious Fears, and make us Importunately Solicitous of our Everlasting State. How little would the World hive of our Thoughts? and how seriously should we Devote our whole Time to the Service of that God, before whose Tribunal we must shortly give up our Accounts? When I know that I have but a few steps from hence to the Regions of Darkneſs, and am convinc'd that the next Hour, or the next Day ſhall put a Period to all my Projects, and cut the Thread of my Deſigns; and that to Morrow ſhall Seal up the Cabinet of Fate,

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and

and place me in an Irreversible Condition, and am all this while sensible that I am in an Unrepentant State; how will this damp my Mind, and put the whole Man into Disorder and Confusion? how earnestly desirous would it make me, that I might have *Hezekiah's* long Day added to my Life, and cause me solemnly to Vow a Careful and a Right Use of it? Now 'tis as certain that we must all Die, as tho' God should tell us it by a Voice of Thunder, and 'tis no less certain, that that Day is unknown to us. There have been Persons of all Ages, of all Ranks and Conditions, who have unexpectedly, and upon no manner of notice paid that Debt; and therefore may we not rationally suppose that the same Misfortune shall be ours? I am now Healthful and Strong, what if Death should for  
all

all that rush upon me like an Armed Man, and immediately present me to Judgment? I am now but soft in my Spring and Verdure, what if notwithstanding this, the King of Terrors should lay his cold Hands upon me, and assure me that my days are numbred, and are at an end? How am I prepar'd for such a severe Assault as this? Or what Spiritual Provision have I laid up for so long a Journey? I am now committing my self to my Drowzy Pillow, and going to take my Nightly Repose, what if amidst my Flattering Security, I should hear that Astonishing Expression; *this night shall thy soul be required at thy hands,* how could I digest so severe a Sentence? How have I Employed my Time, and busied my Thoughts this proceeding Day? or what Comfort can I propose to my self from

a view of my whole Life? Has my Time been constantly Employ'd in the Serious Provision for Eternity, and has the Service of God taken up the greatest part of my Life? Have I studied which way to lay out my Precious Minutes, in order to my Eternal Well-being, or does not my Conscience rather now Reproach me for having been Extravagantly Idle? Such Thoughts as these would certainly upon such a Summons attend every one of us; and therefore cannot but be very becoming us every Minute of our Lives, and if duly exercis'd and apply'd, would certainly cause us to stand upon our guard, and not to misemploy one Day, least it should prove to be our last. 'Tis true indeed, Modest Refreshment, and Innocent Recreations, are as necessary for Advancing the Interest of  
our

Has our Souls, as the Ease of our Bodies, and I Serve God as much in a Moderate Relaxation of Thought or Devotion, as I do by keeping the String of Business always tiff, or my Knees always bent, and my Hands Erect, but what I contend for, is this. That we do not vainly squander away our Precious Minutes, or misimploy them in a continued Series of Worldly Business; that we suffer not this World, or the Cares of it, to absorb all our Time, and utterly Disregard our Eternal Interest; but since we have a Concern of so great Moment upon us, as the saving our Souls, we mind that one thing necessary, and never suffer our Minds to deviate from our Grand Concern; but wisely Improve every Day to it's proper end, and thereby fully answer that Great Design which we



came into the World about ; and  
since *this Day*, this present Minute  
is only ours, not Foolishly *boast*  
*our selves of to morrow ; because we*  
*know not what one day may bring*  
*forth.*

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LUKE

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LUKE XXII. *ver.* XIX.

*This is my Body which is given for you : do this in remembrance of me.*

**A**mongst all those Blessings in which Mankind seems to take satisfaction, there is none with which we are more deeply affected, than Deliverance from Calamities: For as the Passion of *Fear* and *Grief* are (according to Philosophers) more impressive upon our Senses than those of *Hope* and *Love*; so it must needs fall out, that the release from the former will be more satisfactory than the completion of the latter.

For let our *Hopes* be buoyed up with the rapid Torrent of an expected Felicity, and let our *Love*

swim in the full Stream of our Desires effected, the first is but the glimmering of Satisfaction, and the latter quickly dies or grows languid by fruition. But on the other hand, let our Thoughts be benighted with the sad Apprehensions but of an imminent *Danger*, with what a busie activeness do we bestir our selves to the *evading of it*? And if by chance we lie under the heavy Pressures of a present Grievance, with what regret do we shrink under our Burthen, *Curse* our ill *Fate*, and repine and murmur at the Author and Instrument of it?

All which being so, What *Transports of Passion* must we needs be in, when we compare our past with our present state? Impendent Danger on one hand, exquisite without a parallel, inexpressible Deliverance on the other, effected without our assistance: Fallen  
Man

Man grovelling in Sin, and hastning to Eternal Ruine; a gracious God *speeding* our Rescue by his own *Misery*. Here's in one Scale *Mankind* distracted through Fears, and rack'd with the sad Thoughts of a future State: Here's in the other, an Innocent *Redeemer*, no less so through the Sense of our Sins and Transgressions: Here's the Raptures of *Joy* succeeding the Pangs of *Despair*, and Mercy seated where Judgment ought to have taken place. Here's Sin in one expiated by the Innocent Death of another; and here's a Kindness freely dispens'd, which Men and Angels could not otherwise have purchas'd: Here's our *Holy Jesus* giving *his Body* for the Redemption of our Souls, and requires nothing for the Kindness, but that we will not forget it. *This is my Body which is given for you: This do in remembrance of me.*

Which

Which Words import as much as though our Saviour had said thus:

My beloved Friends and Followers, that you were brought into a low miserable Condition by the Sin of your first Parents, you cannot but be sensible; and that you were out of a capacity of freeing your selves from those Chains of Darkness, you are no less sensible; which Dreadful Condition of yours, I your Saviour being touch'd withal, was highly concern'd which way to *snatch* you out of this *Fire of Afflictions*; and seeing that nothing less than mine own Blood could effect it, and that too by being shed upon an Accursed and Disgraceful Tree, I resolv'd to go through that Direful Scene, and to offer up my Body as a Sacrifice for you, of which this Bread which I now break, is a Sign or Emblem. Now  
I see

I see you pretend (as indeed you ought) to have a great Value and Esteem for me your dying Saviour, you seem very sensible of my being Cloath'd with Misery, *and wrinkled with Sable Cares* for your sakes: And withal, you seem to be desirous of some Opportunity, whereby you may attest your Gratitude and Thankfulness to me for those galling Calamities, which I have suffered for your *Redemption*: This you seem mighty Zealous in, and very desirous of: for my part, it is not any pleasure to me, nor is it my desire to lay any severe Task, or heavy Impositions upon you; but yet I am now about to leave the World, and to die a bitter, an accursed and shameful Death for the Compleating your Salvation, and I am unwilling, I must confess, that you should *lock* such Signal Favours as these out of your remembrance,



brance, and therefore I resolve to try whether these your great Pretences have any thing in them besides *Ceremony* and *Complement*.

I will lay one easie Injunction upon you, which is *this*: You see that I am now quitting this Earthly Station, and ascending to *Heaven* from whence I came, so that I cannot afford you my Bodily Presence any longer; however, when I have left this World, all ye that have any hearty respect for me, be so kind as to meet lovingly together at my House, and Eat and Drink this Representative of my Body and Blood in my Name at my Table, still remembring, discoursing of, and laying before you the Agony and Bloody Sweat, the Bitter Death, Cross, and Passion, and all the Meritorious Sufferings of me your Master and Redeemer. And now certainly you must needs acknowledge that  
this

this is no very severe Penance which I enjoyn you; and therefore if (after all your specious Pretences) any of you should either wilfully or carelessly neglect this small piece of Service, which I so earnestly enjoyn you, I shall then really believe that all your Protestations are nothing but Noise and Shuffling. If you have any Value therefore for this *Body of mine, which is given for you, This do in remembrance of me.*

This is the Substance of our Saviour's Words in my Text, from which (thus briefly explain'd) I shall endeavour to shew you the great reasonableness of a *frequent Communion*, and the monstrous Indiscretion, as well as Disobedience, if we refuse to perform this Injunction of our *Holy Jesus*, denying, or neglecting to *do this in remembrance of him.* And this I shall do, first from the easiness of the Service,  
and

and the slender Returns which Christ requires of us for those great Favours he has confer'd upon us.

2<sup>ly</sup>. From the vast Advantages which will accrue from a frequent Reception, in order to the encreasing those Graces which are absolutely necessary to Salvation.

The first shews us our *Duty*, the second, the great *Benefit* of Receiving the *Holy Sacrament*. The latter of which being a Topick not frequently inculcated, may perhaps be the more grateful to you for its Novelty.

I begin with the first, viz. To endeavour to shew you the great reasonableness of a frequent *Communion* from the easiness of the Service, and the slender Returns which Christ requires of us for so great Favours bestowed upon us.

Had our God, like those of the Heathens, required us to eat our

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own Children in Sacrifice, or by way of Atonement to offer up our dearest Friends, or the Noblest of our Relations; had he bid us cut and slash our beloved Flesh, and bath our selves in our own Blood; had he bid us lay down our life for him, and commemorate his Death by rushing *our selves into our own*: Nay, had he requir'd but the first Fruit of our Flocks, and of our Herds, of our Oyl, and of our Meal; these perhaps to some would have seem'd *hard Sayings, and grievous Commandments*; and the Kindness of our Redeemer, tho' inexpressibly great, would have seem'd to have been purchas'd by us at too dear a rate.

Nay, if we reflect upon the State of our Fore-fathers, and therein view those almost *innumerable Sacrifices* and Offerings which were enjoyn'd them under the Oeconomy of the Law,  
the

the lazy humor of our days would repute that too severe a Task for us now, altho' our Reward do vastly transcend theirs.

But that the Mercy of God may surmount not only our *Merits*, but our *Expectation* too, we have a Saviour who hath delivered us not only from the *Curse*, but from the *Burthen* of the *Law* likewise. He hath fully absolv'd us from one, and hath laid no Injunction upon us in the room of the other. He only tells us, that he thinks that we have some reason to *remember* this Kindness, and not to bury his Favours in Oblivion; and therefore in order thereunto, he invites us to come now and then to take a small Repast with him, as a *Memorandum* that he has been our Friend and Benefactor.

He

He requires nothing of us, but that we will let him have our Company at Supper, there to think, to meditate and discourse of those Obliging Favours which he hath long since done for us; the Effects of which do yet, and will for ever continue with us. And now is this such an hard piece of Service? Has not our Blessed Redeemer merited as much at our Hands as this comes too? Doth he not however deserve *something* as an acknowledgment? And if he do, what less can we do for him? Should he have left it to our selves to have made choice of some Method whereby to attest our Acceptance, what easier, what cheaper way could we have invented? 'Tis but what we do every day at home; *Eating* and *Drinking*, and at a cheaper rate too, it costs us nothing; and therefore if we refuse *doing this*, which is



so mighty facil, it appears we will do nothing for him.

For indeed (as one very well observes) 'this is not only a Disobedience, but an Unkindness which strikes not only at the Authority, but at the Love of our Lord, when he so affects an Union with us, that he Creates Mysteries only to effect it; when he descends even to our Sensuality, and because we want Spiritual Appetites, puts himself within reach of our Natural; and as he once veil'd his Divinity in Flesh, so now he sacramentally veils even that Flesh under the Form of our Corporal nourishment, only that he may the more indissolvably unite, yea, incorporate himself with us. When I say he does all this, we are not only Impious, but Inhumane if it will not attract us. Nay farther, when he does all this upon the most,

most endearing Memory of what he has before done for us, when he presents himself to our Embraces in the same form wherein he presented himself to God for our Expiation, when he shews us those Wounds which our Iniquities made; those Stripes by which we were healed, and that Death by which we are reviv'd; we shall be strangely Rude and Impious, if we turn our Backs, and refuse to Commemorate so great a Blessing. But,

2ly. If we be not so Ingenious as to be mov'd by Gratitude and Obedience, let us be so wise as to do it for Interest, for Advantage; and therein let us consider, that;

1st. Our Faith is hereby confirm'd.

2ly. Our Hope is by this strengthened.

3<sup>ly</sup>. Our Charity is thereby enlarged.

4<sup>ly</sup>. Our Thankfulness to God is by this inflam'd : And,

5<sup>ly</sup>. Our Repentance is hereby promoted.

Which five Topicks, if I can make out, may, methinks, be sufficient to evince the Reasonableness of this our Blessed Saviour's Institution, and be Engagement enough to incite us to *do this in remembrance of him.*

Of these therefore in Order, and,  
First, By a Participation of the Blessed Sacrament our Faith is confirm'd. 'Tis, I confess, the Accusation that a Great Man of our own lays upon our Church, that through a too unreasonable fondness of this great *Mystery* we *abuse it to many ends*, amongst which he reckons this, That, we teach, *That it confirms our Faith in Christ*; whereas indeed, says he,

he,

he, the receiving of it is a sign of Faith confirmed; and men come to it, to testifie that they do believe, not to procure that they may believe. But by the Favour of that *Learned Person*, we acknowledge with him, that it is a sign of Belief, and that no Man ought to approach that *Sacred Ordinance* without Faith in Christ's Merits: But yet we *insist* likewise, that there are degrees of that Faith. For that all habits are encreas'd by being exercised, a slender Philosopher will inform you; and that this Ordinance requires great Exercises of the Grace of Faith, a Novice in Divinity will inform you likewise. For we have in this Action the most lively Emblem and Representation of God's Love to Mankind; we see God in the most severe instance of Tryal (even that of Sacrificing his own Son) faithfully accomplishing his Word; and

therefore what ground of distrust can we have, that he will not in concerns of an Inferiour Nature, approve himself to be a God that cannot lye, nor deny himself? How can we in any case distrust his Mercy, or suspect his Bounty, when in the highest Instance we have experienced his Fidelity? If therefore our Dependance on the Almighty Goodness begin to faint, or our Faith begin to stagger; if the greatness of our Sins deter us from the Hopes of his Mercy, let us in the *Blessed Sacrament* view him *shedding the Blood* of his own Son to advance our Interest, and to *redeem us from the Curse*, Gal. 3. 13. and then certainly we cannot chuse but argue thus with the Apostle, *If God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?*

2/y. Our Hope is by this strength-  
ned.

There is nothing which doth more  
deject a Considering Man, than the  
Thoughts of his fallen Condition:  
For what can such Meditations sug-  
gest less unto him, than the Frowns  
of an Angry God, together with the  
fatal loss of Happiness in this  
World, and Eternal Felicity in the  
next. And such Dreadful Appre-  
hensions as these must needs ruffle  
and discompose our Spirits, and cause  
a Regret and Dispondency through the  
whole Man. Now when our Souls  
are put upon the Rack by such  
Tormenting Fears: When the hei-  
nousness of our Sins reminds us of the  
sadness of our Condition: When  
our Hope is well nigh lost, and Des-  
peration hath almost swallowed us  
up, will not the sight of Christ  
Crucified recruit our Dying Hopes,  
and summon together our scatter'd  
Spi-



Spirits? May we not entertain Comfortable Hopes of Mercy, when even before our Eyes we see the Lamb of God Groaning, Bleeding, Dying for our Sins? Will it not highly encourage us to consider, that those Agonies by which our Sins were Expiated, were sufficient to content the most Rigorous Severity? Must it not needs abate the Wounds of our Conscience, and diminish our Fears whilst we are Eye-witnesses of his Crucifixion, and do in the Blessed Sacrament, even Behold the Lamb of God that took away the Sins of the World? John i. 19.

'Twould certainly be a Disparagement to the Efficacy of our Lord's Passion, should we after all this despair of Mercy, be utterly disconsolate, and thereby be mov'd away from the hope of the Gospel, Col. i. 23. But,

3<sup>ly</sup>. Our Charity is by this enlarg'd, and that,

1<sup>st</sup>. To the whole Church,

2<sup>ly</sup>. To each particular Member.

First, Our Love and Charity is by this enlarg'd to the whole Church. 'Tis observ'd by one, That the neglect of the Sacrament hath occasioned *not only the Debauchery, but the Division of the times; and that the frequent observance of it, would reduce us not only to Sobriety, but to Union likewise.* And in the Infancy of Christianity, as well as some Ages since, those Persons were look'd upon as Disturbers of the Peace and Tranquility of the Church, who refus'd the Sacred Mysteries. And the Word *συνάξις*, which the Greek Fathers do so frequently use for the Blessed Sacrament, seems to intimate no less than a gathering together of Christians in Love and Amity, to return thanks for a common Benefit.

fit. And that this Interpretation is Genuine, we may reasonably guess from that Practice of the Primitive Christians of sending some part of the Analec'ts or Remains to absent Friends, tho' of other *Parishes*, as Pledges and Tokens of Love and Agreement in the Unity of the same Faith, as *Eusebius* tells us in *Irenæus* his Epistle to Pope *Victor*; which Constitution continued in force till it was interdicted by the Council of *Laodicea*, which was after the middle of the fourth Century. And altho' that Canon was for some reasons abrogated, yet all along those who refus'd to joyn in such Sacred Assemblies, did (in the opinion of all Good Men) tacitly accuse themselves to be Enemies to the Church, and Renegado's to Christianity. And this was the very reason why (as *Justin Martyr* tells us) *the absent in his time communicated as well as the*

pre-

present ; each absent Parishioner having the Consecrated Elements carried home to him, to testifie, that altho' some Important Affairs, or Bodily Indisposition intervened, yet they were of *the same mind, and of the same heart*, Acts 4. 32. Nay, so absolute a necessity they thought there was for the Reception of *the Holy Sacrament*, that in one of the Canons of *Timotheus*, sometimes Patriarch of *Alexandria*, you may see these Words, Ἐὰν πῖς δαμονίζῃ ὁ ὀφείλει μεταλαμβάνειν τοῦ ἁγίου μυστηρίου. If any of the Faithful be a Demoniack, i. e. a Lunatick or Madman, he ought (in his *lucida intervalla*) to partake of the Holy Mysteries. For this is the great Test of our Religion, and the only *τεστὶμον* that can give any Evidence that we are none of *those that cause Divisions* amongst us, Rom. 16. 17.

But,

But, besides all this, methinks when we see the Spouse of the Church Sacrificing himself for the Peace and Unity of it; when we see himself bequeath this as a Legacy with his Dying Breath, *My Peace I leave with you, my Peace I give unto you.* When we hear him enjoyning it to his Church, and see him bleeding to accomplish it, we can not for shame make those Wounds wider by our Divisions, and only for an *ἀδιάφορον*, something perhaps in it self indifferent, rent the seamless Coat of Christ. No, we are Dissenters from the excellent Rules of Primitive Christianity, if for such Niceties as these, we play away the Peace of the Church; and 'tis a great sign that our Wounds are very putrid, if the Blood of Christ himself will not cement them.

2ly. The receiving of the Sacrament is a strong Engagement to the Practice of Charity towards every particular Person.

And this Charity I § 1st. Love.  
shall branch out into 2ly. Beneficence.

And first, That the receiving of the Sacrament must needs enhance our *Love* one to another, and unite us with the *Bond of Peace and Charity*, cannot be doubted by any who will but give himself time to consider, that in Holy Writ it is intitled a *Love-feast*, and a *Feast of Charity*; and pursuant to this in the beginning of this Christian Service, the Deacon was anciently wont to cry, *Μή τις ἔχῃ τι πρὸς τὸν ἀδελφόν*. Let no man have ought against his Brother; and then followed the *Osculum sanctum*, the Kiss of Reconciliation. And thus the Fathers of the first Coun-



Council of Nice took *Sacrificium purum*, as appears Canon 5: where they expound δῶρον καθαρόν, to be that which is offered, πάντα πνευματικά ἀναγεμμένα, all Malice and Hypocrisie being laid aside; agreeable to that of our Blessed Saviour, Mat. 5. 23. *When thou bringest thy gift to the altar, &c. go first and be reconciled to thy brother, &c.* And indeed, how it can be otherwise, I do not well see; for we have there the Emblem of a *pardoning God*, and a *loving Saviour*; we there see Mercy Triumphant over Justice; and a Compassionate Jesus advancing our Felicity beyond our Hopes. And can we then insist upon the slender Nicety of an Offence; rigorously exacting Satisfaction from our Fellow-servant; when we hear our great Lord say, *I forgave thee all thou owest?* Matth. 18. 28. Can we do less than pardon those little Reproaches and

and Indignities from our Brother, when we know we *deserve far worse*, and yet see that our *innocent Redeemer* when he was reviled, reviled not again? 1 Pet. 2. 23. How can we do less than *love him for whom Christ died*? Rom. 14. 15. And since we see that God so loved us, as to lay down his life for us, surely we must needs conclude with the Apostle, 1 John 4. 11. *That we ought also to love one another.* But above all, how can we who are by the natural frame of our Constitutions, subject to the same Passions, do otherwise than *forgive our Brother*, when 'tis upon that very condition that we are in *this Sacrament* to receive our own Remission, Matth. 18. 33, 35.

2ly. Our Beneficence is hereby likewise enlarg'd.

For what can more create a Respect and Esteem in me for my indigent Brother, than to see in the Sacra-

Sacrament Omnipotence it self veil'd with Misery, and clad with scanty Poverty? to see my Redeemer Disrob'd of his Glory, and (as it were) sanctifying a poor disgraceful Condition by his own Example? How can I condemn my poor Neighbour, when I see *my Redeemer* and *my God* willingly for my sake embrace the same State? In a Word, how can it but open the Bowels of my Commiseration, when I consider, that had it not been for one poor Beggar, I my self had been Eternally Miserable?

Such Considerations as these, no doubt, the Apostles and Primitive Christians had, when they were so *universally Charitable as to seek out, and send Relief to every indigent Member.* Agreeable to which, we retain an *ancient* laudable Constitution of contributing at the Lord's Table to the Necessities of our Brethren;

children ; plainly intimating, that we think that a mighty proper season, and a most convenient place for such Acts of Piety, as if we there see our Redeemer's low Condition, and were sensibly affected with his Indigency ; and therefore since it was too late to do it to himself, yet we were resolv'd by way of Gratitude and Obedience to relieve him in his poor Members, which he takes as *done to himself* ; for *I was an hungry, and ye fed me, &c. inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my poor members, ye did it unto me.*

And indeed, were there nothing in it at first farther than the *bare Offering*, yet I dare be bold to say, that the frequent Practice of it would beget so great an Esteem and Value for the Action, that it would upon all occasions exert itself. For Humanity and Beneficence are so suitable to our Nature,

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that

that they win upon the Soul by every repeated Act, and do insensibly ingratiate themselves in our Affections by an Habitual Practice. But then they must do much more so, if that be true, which an Ingenious Modern Writer of our own Asserts, that *there is not in all the Mystery of Godliness, in all the Oeconomy of the Gospel, so expedite, so infallible a means of the growth in any Grace, as a frequent Participation of this blessed Sacrament.*

For, Fourthly, Our Thankfulness to God is by this inflam'd.

And for Evidence of this, we need go no farther than to look into the Design of it's Institution, which our Church-catechism tells us, was *for a thankful Remembrance of the Death of Christ, and of the Benefits which we receive thereby.* And accordingly St. Cyril tells us, that when the People began to bring their

their Offering to the Altar, the Priest was to say, "Ἀνα τὰς καρδίας, Lift up your Hearts: To which they answered, "Ἐχομεν πρὸς τὸ κύριον, We lift them up unto the Lord. Εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ κυρίῳ, Let us give thanks unto the Lord. The People answered, "Ἀξιὸν καὶ δίκαιον, It is meet and just we should do so. Which Versicles our English Liturgy in her Communion Service doth (you know) without any alteration retain to this day, to denote to us how proper a season that has been thought in all Ages of Christianity, to offer up a Sacrifice of *Praise* and *Thanksgiving*. And for this reason, no doubt, it is frequently call'd by the Fathers, the *Eucharist*, to intimate, that as it is a sign of that second Covenant, which God made with Man, so it ought to be received with *Blessing* and *Thanksgiving*. But besides, methinks it is preposterous to imagine, that this Action

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which



which Assaults our very Senses, and strikes our Heart by the most Lively Representation of God's greatest Mercy, should not (if we have any Gratitude) move us to a chearful Acknowledgment.

‘ To see God (as one expresses  
‘ it) send down his very Bowels  
‘ amongst us to witness his Com-  
‘ passion, to satisfy for us by his  
‘ own Death, and attach himself  
‘ for our Liberty, to see our Re-  
deemer and our Friend clad with  
Beggary and Disgrace, that we may  
thereby abound in Wealth and Ho-  
nour; to see him Executed on a  
Cross as a Malefactor and a Slave,  
that we may thereby be freed from  
the Dominion of Satan; to see him  
humbly stoop from the Joys of  
Heaven, that we may be nobly ad-  
vanced thither; to see him who  
knew no Sin, to be *made Sin*, and  
*a Curse for us*, and that not whilst

we were his Friends; but when we were in open Hostility with him: These are such Acts of Kindness, as none could, none would perform, but he whose Goodness is as Extensive as is his Greatness; and therefore if we have any spark of *Thankfulness* in us, the *visible* Proof of these things must needs blow it up into the Ardours of Affection, and make us more and more mindful of, and thankful to that God that sav'd us.

But then when we farther consider our own Demerits, and the miserableness of our former Condition, being *under Sin, under Condemnation, under the Curse*: When we are reminded of the consequent of these things, and consider that nothing but that Blood which we see now shed, could expiate for us; and when we withal consider that there are still many thousands, who,

whilst we are surrounded with the Sun of Righteousness, are wrap'd up in Darkness and Idolatry; and they starve with Hunger, or surfeit with Profaneness, whilst we are partaking of that *Bread that came from Heaven*. Certainly such Thoughts as these will nobly advance our Thankfulness, and make us daily more and more to thirst after those *Eucharistick Bowls*, and fill our Hearts with *passionate Eulogies* to the Author of our Redemption.

Fifthly, Our Repentance is hereby promoted.

We usually hate and detest the fawning Treachery of *Judas* that betray'd our Saviour, the black Suggestions of the *Jewish* Priests that did impeach him, the rude Carriage of the Populacy that did abusively insult over him; we abhor those poisonous Tongues that revild him, and those bloody Hands that

that smote him. How can we then reflect on those Sufferings which are there represented to us, without extream Displeasure against those Sins of ours which were the occasion of them? For, alas! the *Jews* were but the *Instruments* of his *Pas-*  
*sion*; the long train of our Iniquities were the chief, the real Actors of that direful Tragedy. He was wounded for our Transgressions, and bruised for our Iniquities. He was delivered for our Offences, and became a Curse for us; that is, it was we, who by our Sins did impeach, did adjudge, did sentence him to death. 'Twas our Obscenity which besmear'd his glorious Face with Spittle, and our Profane Oaths, Cursing and Blasphemy were the false Witnesses that forg'd the black Indictment against his Sacred Person. 'Twas our Wantonness that expos'd him naked; and our Surfeiting and Drun-

kenness that gave him *Vinegar and Gall* to drink. 'Twas the Virulency of our *Tongues* which was the *Spear* that gor'd his precious Side, and our deep Sleep of Sin made him give up the *Ghost*. And can we then chuse but hate those Sins which were the perfidious Betrayers of our dearest Friend? Shall we not utterly detest those unjust Slanders, who have abus'd the Lord of Righteousness? Shall we not for ever abhor those barbarous Murderers that have slain our own Brother?

I remember 'tis Recorded in ancient Story, that when *Antony* was in a Funeral Oration, rhetorically copious in perswading the *Romans* to revenge the Death of *Cæsar*, he expatiates of the great excellency of the Person, shews that he was crown'd with Valour, Wisdom, and Industry; recounts his many Victories, shews his Conduct, and the seve-

several Stratagems he made use of, decyphers the vast kindness he had for that flourishing City, and how he had attested it by *ample Legacies* at his Death, as well as by his *Courage* and *Resolution* whilst he liv'd; and that after all this, he should be barbarously murder'd by his own Senators, was a Crime so heinous, that the Gods themselves stood amaz'd at the horribleness of the Fact. All this they hear, tho' with a mixture of Wrath and Pity, yet with somewhat of Patience. But when he shews them the *Princely Vestment*, and in it the Holes and the Blood which were occasioned by those murdering Instruments; when they see the *Purple* chang'd into *Scarlet*, and read the violence of his Enemies by the number of his Wounds, which they see in his Garment; this adds Wings to their passionate Resentment, and spurs forward their enflam'd Indignation, they presently snatch



snatch Instruments of Revenge out of his own Funeral Pile, and destroy, if not the Persons, the Habitations of the Murderers. Now to bring this to our selves: We may perhaps hear or read the *Passion* of *our Saviour* elegantly decypher'd, and have the greatness of his Sufferings, and the vastness of his Love described to us with all the Flourishes of Rhetorick, and not be much transported at the Discourse: But can we in the *Blessed Sacrament* see his Wounds gaping, his Blood pouring forth, and his Flesh broken in pieces, without Indignation against our selves, who were the direful Actors of this Scene? No sure, if we have any love for our dying Lord, or any respect for a crucify'd Redeemer; if we have any regard to the Sufferings of a beloved Friend, or any kindness for our greatest Benefactor,  
unless

unless we design to re-act *Judas* his part, and to *crucifie afresh the Lord of Life*, Heb. 6. 6. Unless, whilst we boast our selves Christians, we design to practise and espouse the manner of the *Jews*; Briefly, unless all our Pretences to Religion and Christianity be but Ceremony and Complement, we shall at such a Spectacle as this, be stricken with hatred of our Sins, and a full purpose to decline them for the time to come.

But if we do not proceed thus far, there will however by our receiving be one step made towards a new Life: For let the *Debauches* of the Age disregard the Methods of Salvation, and put the evil day never so far from them, yet if upon any account (be it Political or other) they appear at the *Wedding of the Lamb*, they dare not approach without something of a Wedding-gar-

garment, some more than ordinary Preparation for this great Interview; there will be at least some few Prayers, and faint Resolutions, some *superficial Repentance*, or *Ahab-like Humiliation*; and who knows but these small beginnings, may, like the *Cloud of Elijah*, *over-spread* the whole Man? Who knows but this almost-Convert may find so much Pleasure and inward Comfort from this interval of Impiety, as may occasion a Perseverance? For indeed, these weak Intentions do usually continue for some few days after they have received; for the most stout-hearted Sinner cannot so far conquer his Fears, as to rush from the *Lord's Table* into a *Brothel-house*, or to remove from the *Cup of Blessing* to the *Cup of Devils*. No Man, I dare say, is such an accomplished Sinner, as to resolve, when he hath a view of his crucify'd Saviour, that he will by his Sins and  
Impie-

Impieties, *recrucifie that Lord of Life*. No; Men have however, good Resolutions at such a time as this: 'Tis at least *like seed sown upon a Rock, where it hath some Earth*; and who knows but a peculiar influence of Heaven may enable it to bring forth Fruit? However there will accrew from this piece-meal Preparation this advantage, that it will in some measure bring us to a recollection of our selves, and for some little time stop the career of our Sin, which is always the first Fruits of Repentance.

Thus having, I hope, plainly convinc'd you of the great reasonableness of this our Blessed Saviour's Institution, and shew you the great inducements which we have of *doing this in remembrance of him*; and that, if not as we are oblig'd by Duty, yet as it tends so vastly for our *Interest*, and the improvement of those Graces,

Graces, without a large share of which, it is impossible for us ever to see God; I should now proceed to draw some few Inferences by way of Application; but before I do that, give me leave to declare, that I desire not to be mistaken in what I have already deliver'd, as if I went about to encourage Men to *receive the Holy Sacrament* remisly, or without preparation. No, the sum of what I have said is only this; that if my great Lord and Master absolutely command me without restriction, to do such or such a piece of Service for him, I think I more highly affront him in the careless neglect and never attempting of it, than I can do in the performing of it, tho' there be some Defects, some *Sphalmata* and *Errata* in the doing of it; I had better shew my good Will and Obedience to a known Command, tho' I am

not

not thoroughly cleans'd according to the Purification of the Sanctuary, than disavow my blessed Redeemer by a thorough neglect of so *positive* a Command. And now what I have to say by way of Application, shall (lest I should abuse your time) be summ'd up briefly in these two Inferences.

First, That the dark Heathen World may more reasonably expect Salvation, than those Christians who wilfully neglect the Holy Sacrament.

'Tis St. Paul's Rule not to judge *those that are without the Churches*: But yet if we adhere to the common square of human Opinion, we may justly conclude him to be in a better Condition as to his future state, who hath liv'd up to that shadow of Reason and Conscience, which was the bare dictate of Nature, than he who has known the way  
of



of Truth, and yet has departed from it. Sins of Ignorance are not clad in so black a dye, as those which are accompanied with a stiff premeditated Knowledge: Nor are we so angry at the impertinent peevish Actions of little Children, as at the resolute Affronts of him who falls not under the denomination of a *Minor*. And can we then judge less, but that God will more unkindly resent the wilful Abuses and Neglects of Mankind, than the frailties of human Infirmary, or the mistakes of blind *Ignorance*, or a misguided Zeal? He does not *desire to reap where he has not sown*, but where his hand has been plentiful in dispersing the Seeds of a pure Knowledge and enlightned Religion, there he expects a large increase of his Glory, or else the end of that People shall be *Fire and a Curse*. Now have we not read and heard  
of

of the superstitious bravery of the Pagan World, in the Adoration they pay to their Gods and Pagods? And can we then refrain blushing at the lazy temper of a profane Christian, who will do nothing for the sake of his Redeemer? Can we without disdain against our selves see them rigorously oppose Nature it self in offering their own Bodies in Sacrifice to appease their supposed angry Deities? And can we at the same time so highly abuse our Maker, as to deny a performance to those Injunctions which he has laid upon us? Could the Pagan World be satisfied, that their false Gods requir'd nothing of them, but what was mighty facile in it's observance, with what *lo's* of Joy would they receive such glad tidings, and readily endeavour a performance? And then may we not highly presume that they will rise

up in Judgment against, and condemn that People (be they who they will) that will not do as much in the Worship of the God of *Israel*? Who will not approach his Temple, tho' at hand, and *in the corners of the Streets*, whilst the dark Pagan chearfully undertakes the severity of a long and tedious Pilgrimage, who will not fall down in a *commemorative Sacrifice* to the *Holy Jesus*, whilst the other offers not only whole *Hecatombs* of Bulls and Goats, but even Sacrifice their own Infant-off-spring, the *Fruit of their Body*, for the Sin of their Soul?

And this is the first Inference I make, that the dark Heathen may more reasonably expect Salvation, than those Christians who wilfully neglect the Holy Sacrament.

Secondly, We may, from what has been said, infer, that if we neglect this easie Injunction, we do thereby

thereby sufficiently denote to the World, that we value our worldly Interests, our Pleasures, or our Profits beyond *the means of Grace, and the hopes of Glory.*

For let our Employment be what it will, do we not upon all occasions fit and prepare our Affairs by a previous consideration, and put them into such a posture, as shall tend the most to our Advantage? Do we suffer every little diversion to cut off the entail of our Profit? Will the *Northern Blasts* of a severe Winter, or the *scorching Sun-beams* of the *Dog-days*, detain the Merchant from his Voyage and the Exchange, or the Tradesman from his Market? Will a few drops of Rain, or a Visit from a Friend, divert any of us from the prosecution of a good Bargain? And yet all and any of these are, we think, excuse enough for our not coming to the Sacrament.

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ment. *I am not worthy, saith one, and therefore I cannot come.* What Man, I pray you, ever us'd the like expression, when he had the tender of a fair Estate, or some worldly Emolument? *I have no time, says a second, to prepare my self, and may not come without my Wedding-garment.* But hast thou not at the same time extravagantly wasted as many opportunities *inter vinum & oleum*, or betwixt the Comb and the Glass, the dressing thy decaying Body, as would, had they been well employ'd, have fitted and prepar'd thy Soul? *My Wife, my Husband, or my Child is sick and indispos'd, and therefore, says a third, I cannot leave them.* Would this really keep thee from the Prosecution of thy worldly Affairs? Wouldst thou not beg thy Friends pardon for some few hours absence, being to make a very advantageous Purchase, or to take

take possession of some large Estate? Wouldst thou quit thine Interest rather than thy Complaisance, and die poor and a beggar, rather than be thought uncivil or ungenteel? In a Word, let us put such Interrogatories as these to our selves, and if our Consciences answer them in the negative, we must needs confess our selves inexcusable, whilst that which will not palliate our neglect of any worldly Entertainment, shall yet be thought excuse enough for our rude and negligent behaviour towards *the Son of God*. To conclude; we had much better be plain and ingenuous in the matter, and declare once for all, that *we will not obey* the Commands of our dying Saviour, than thus to shuffle, and make pitiful Evasions in a matter so momentous. Our Damnation would be much easier, would we so far divest the Hypo-

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crite,



crute, as to declare, that we would not serve the Lord; rather than to demean our selves under the pretext of Christ's Disciples, and yet to tax him of such Severity, as to declare by our continual neglect, that we cannot do this in remembrance of him. To whom, with the Father and Holy Spirit, three Persons and one God, be ascrib'd, as is most due, all Honour, Praise, Might, Majesty and Dominion, henceforth, and for evermore. *Amen.*

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II CHRON.

## II CHRON. XIX. VI. VII.

*Take heed what you do, for ye judge not  
for man, but for the Lord who is  
with you in the judgment.*

*Wherefore let the fear of the Lord be  
upon you, take heed and do it; for  
there is no iniquity with the Lord  
our God, nor respect of persons, nor  
taking of gifts.*

**A**lthough Mankind by the  
instinct of Nature a socia-  
ble Being, and delights in  
Converse and Society; yet such is  
the pravity of his Inclinations, that  
were there not a Coercive Power  
from without, as well as a Sense  
of God and Religion from within;  
the whole World would in a little

C c 4 time

time be turn'd into one single Aceldama.

The sturdy Lion, or the bloody Tyger, the Leopard, or the Panther, will rarely, if at all, prey upon their own Species: Yet Man tho' endued with Reason, sticks not to be guilty of a more brutish Cruelty. The First-born of the World, did inhumanly Butcher his own Brother: And *Israel* (God's chosen one) supplanted and over-reacht the First-born of *Isaac*.

And Men are so mighty prone to these things, that were it not for human Sanctions, the Dens and Caves of the Earth would be our safest retreat, to secure our selves from wrong and injury. Natural Religion indeed, lays strong Ties upon a Man's Conscience to answer the Ends of his Being, and revealed Religion doth much more so; but yet the Axes of a Temporal Au-

Authority, are so much more cogent than natural Truths, or supernatural Revelation, that *Aaron's Rod* would do little good, unless fortified by the *Power and Scepter of Moses*. If there were no Law to restrain Man within the Fences and Mounds of Justice, his Strength would be the only Rule of his Will, and the Standard of his Actions. That would be mine which I could get by force; and yet I should have Right to it no longer than whilst a more powerful Arm graspt it from me. The Sons of Violence would engross what their Swords could reach, and the best Patriot might starve, whilst the unjust Banditti were surrounded with Plenty. Trade and Commerce would be empty Names; and Rapine and Injustice would be as common as Stones in the Streets. Liberty and Property would be banish'd

nish'd the Earth, and our Lives as well as our Estates would be a continual Jeopardy. A Tumultuous Rabble would insult over the greatest Potentates; and an ill-bred Mob tread upon the Learned and the Grave. *Tribulation and Anguish* would be the Portion of the Virtuous and Religious, and perpetual Dread and Fear would crowd into the Hearts of all the Sons of *Adam*.

These and innumerable worse Calamities would, like an unbridled Deluge, overflow universal Mankind, were there no restraints but what are impos'd by Nature or by Grace; and were the Purple and the Scarlet taken from us, the State and the Altar would soon be so too.

So that 'tis to such as you, *my Lord*, that we owe both the safety of our Persons, the security of our Estates, and the enjoyment of our Re-

Religion; and all Military Conquests abroad would do us little service, unless you kept our Peace at home. 'Tis by your Administration alone that Piety is advanced; Truth preserved, Tranquility settled, Priviledge bounded, Innocency protected, Learning encouraged, our Persons secured from Violence, and our Estates from Plunder. In short, *'tis Judgment alone that establisheth a Land.* Prov. 19. 4. And the exercise of that is by the Great King of Heaven and Earth reposed in your Hands: And therefore you have need to take heed what you do: *for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore let the fear of the Lord be upon you, take heed and do it; for there is no iniquity in the Lord our God, nor respect of Persons, nor taking of gifts.*

Which



Which words were spoken by good *Jehosaphat* King of *Judah*, and may properly be call'd his Charge to the Judges, when he Commissioned them to go their several Circuits; and import as much as tho he had expressed himself more largely thus,

I am now about to entrust you with a concern of no less Moment, than the Welfare of my Subjects, the Honor of my Person, and the Establishment of my Kingdom; and therefore 'tis necessary that I advise you in a Matter of so great Weight, to be careful and circumspect how you behave your selves, in the Management of so great a Charge; greater perhaps than you, at first sight, conceive it to be. For altho' tis true you have your Commission from me, yet the Judgment which is committed to your Charge, belongs to a much greater than

than I am; for it is not mine but the Lords, who is constantly present in your Courts of Judicature, and stands by and sees all your Proceedings, hears all your Awards and Arbitraments, and understands the whole Process of the Hall. Wherefore let his dreadful Presence strike you into an awful regard of him, and let it oblige you to act as impartially, as tho' he was really visible to your bodily Eyes.

I doubt not, but were I, your King, personally upon the Bench with you, no Judgment which was evidently false, would either for Favor or Affection, Lucre or Interest, proceed out of your Lips. Yet alas! what am I when compared to the great King of Heaven and Earth? I can 'tis true at my pleasure send you a *Quietus*, but what is that to the Terrors of that Omnipotent *Jehovah*,

hovah, who when provoked is a consuming Fire? and who will most certainly summons you before the Tribunal of Heaven, call you to a strict Account, and if you have accepted of the person of the wicked; and overthrown the righteous in Judgment. Prov. 18. 5. Notwithstanding your Vestments of Honor, if your Sins be of the same Dye, you shall in the Day of Vengeance be covered with a Robe of Shame, and be clad in confusion as with a Cloak. For there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, but justice and judgment are the habitation of his Throne. Psal. 89. 14. from whence he cannot be moved at any time, thorough respect of Persons or taking of Gifts, but be the Circumstances of the Man never so poor, or never so lofty, God judgeth not according to outward appearance, but judgeth righteous Judgment, and from the Equitableness of those Proceedings,  
no

no Interest or Passion, no gilded Title or honorable Employ, no Trust or Ability can divert him; therefore let my Advice seem seasonable to you this Day, and *take heed what you do, for you judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment, &c.*

This is briefly the Paraphrase of the Text, which suggests unto us these following Particulars.

I. That Judges do personate God himself, who is,

II. A constant Eye-witness of all their Proceedings, and therefore,

III. They ought to be very Circumspect, and to have a reverential Awe and Fear upon them, for that,

IV. If they *pervert Judgment*, God will vindicate his own Honor, and punish them severely for it. *For there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons nor taking of gifts.*

All

All these seem plainly imply'd in the Text. Upon each of which, I purposed to have enlarged at this time, but in the treating of them, I found my Meditations croud in so thick upon me, that (for fear of being too tedious) I was obliged to confine my self to speak only to the two former of them.

I. That Judges do personate God himself, who is

II. A constant Eye-witness of all their Proceedings.

Of which in their Order,

And first, Judges do personate God himself.

And for this Reason it is, that the Greek Fathers do frequently denominate Magistrates *Συνδεγοι*, Co-assessors with God in the Throne of Judgment. Not that he delivers up an absolute Sovereignty to them; but they as his Stewards, Deputies or Lieutenants, are substituted to represent

present him, in administering Justice and Equity, maintaining Order and supporting Peace, among the Children of Men, *helping them to right who suffer wrong, justifying the righteous and condemning the wicked.* Deut. 25. 1. And for this purpose the Almighty hath been pleased to impress his own Character upon them, and to stile them by his own peculiar Title. *Thou shalt not revile the Gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people;* Exod. 22. 28. And who those Gods there mentioned were, you may see, if you please to have recourse to the 8 Verse of that Chapter. *If the thief be not found, then the master of the house shall be brought unto the judges,* those were the Gods before mentioned; thus, again, Psal. 86. 6. *I have said ye are Gods,* אֱלֹהִים *Gods, i. e. in respect to the Fountain of their Power, which was from the Most High, who for*



that reason honored them with his own Name. And 'tis a most remarkable place to our purpose, which we have from the Mouth of God himself, *Exod. 4. 16.* where speaking to *Moses*, he saith, *thou shalt be to him* אלהים *a God*, which the Seventy render thus, οὐ δὲ αὐτῶς ἐσὶν ὁ θεὸς τὸν θεόν. *i. e.* Thou shalt be in the stead of God; thou shalt represent my Person, in commanding and judging and revealing my Will to him; which is the very same with that of *Exod. 7. 1.* Ἐγὼ ἐδούλωκα σε θεόν Φαραώ, *I have appointed thee God over Pharaoh*; I have given the Power of Life and Death into thine Hands, I have placed thee in his Throne, in his Authority who judgeth right; I have substituted thee chief Agent in this weighty Matter. But that which will clear the point most effectually, is what is recorded in *Psal. 82. 1.* *God standeth in the congregation of the*

the mighty, he is a Judge among Gods ; the Word in the Original is  $\gamma\alpha$  which is the Name of the Omnipotent God ; and then these Words must be read thus, *God standeth in the Congregation of God, i. e.* in his own Judicature, or in that Judicature which is erected and authorized by him, *i. e.* it is by Gods Commission that Judges Act, and they do really Personate God himself. Thus the *Jewish Arab*, (as Dr. Hammond observes) glosses upon it, observing that there is a repetition of the Name again instead of the Affix.

But I shall not stay any longer upon the Proof of this Proposition, but shall rather chuse to proceed to draw such Observations, as are deducible from this first Head, and therein I shall observe.

I. That if Judges do Personate God, then they ought to act, as  
D d 2
they

they are convinced God would do, if he sat in their place, as they do in his.

And here perhaps some Persons would not think it any digression, should I draw a Scheme of the Magistrates Duty, and shew wherein they ought to be *Righteous*, as God is *Righteous*, and *Merciful*, as that great Judge of all the Earth is so. But this, my Lord, would be *Τό φῶς ἡλίου δανίζει*  
*ἡ Λύχνον ἐν μεσημβρίᾳ ἀπτεν.* To light a Candle in order to add Lustre to the Sun in it's noon day Glory. And should I herein go about to instruct you in your Duty, I should think that I transgressed my own. But yet I hope it may not be unbecoming this place, or this Assembly, if I a little descant upon those two Cardinal Attributes of God, which he exerciseth as a Judge, viz. His *Justice* and his *Mercy*, and leave it to your particular Breast, to consider how

how far you are concerned to Copy  
after so fair an Original.

First, then, I desire you to consider of the impartial Justice of that great God whom you Personate. Surely he will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment, &c. Job 34. 12. For who ever perisht being innocent, or where were the righteous cut off? Job 4. 7.

There are two things which are more particularly pressing upon a Person to deviate from the Rules of Justice, viz.

First, Favor or Affection, and Secondly, Interest. Now that God is no way warpt or byass'd with either of these, even the Words in the latter part of my Text assure us. For with the Lord our God, there is no respect of persons, nor taking of gifts. The greatest Pomp, and the most splendid Retinue, is no motive to his Favor; nor can the lar-

gest Fortune bribe him to be unjust. It is Innocency alone that can bespeak his Love, and Simplicity of Heart that can engage his Affection; *all his ways are Righteousness and Truth*, and the Man that is not upright, be he what he will, must tremble at his Bar. There the poor helpless Orphan shall have his Complaint heard, though he cannot plead for himself; and the Tears of the Widow and the Afflicted shall be a convincing Dialect. *There is no respect of Face*, or Fortune with him; but the Rich and the Poor, the Course and the Well-favoured, shall be weighed in the Balance of Justice, and Sentence shall be passed without Partiality, and without Hypocrisie.

It is Recorded of *Cæsar*, that in hearing of a Cause betwixt *Cassius* and *Brutus*, he confessed, *Melior causa Cassii, sed denegare Bruto nihil pos-*  
*sit*;

that *Cassius* had Justice on his side, but yet *Brutus* was his Favorite, and therefore he must give Sentence for him. But far be it from God, that he should do wickedness, and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity. Job 34. 10. He will be just in all his ways, and righteous in all his works, his ways are equal, tho' done in the dark, and his Justice irréprovable, tho' acted in secret; in a Word, Impartial Justice is the Habitation of his Throne, and without any respect of Persons, he gives to every Man according to his Works.

And Secondly, as he cannot be swayed by Favor, so he cannot be byassed by Interest.

It is an Observation as old as Tully, *Ingentes divitiæ judiciorum religionem veritatemque solent perfringere*; which I shall chuse to explain by the Mouth of God himself, Deut.



16. 19. *A gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.* But now God will not be caught with such trifling Baits as these; for their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the wrath of the Lord, Ezech. 7. 19. It is true indeed, *Interest* is the great Wheel of Motion in this lower Orb, the Ploughman and Mechanick, the Souldier and the Merchant, the Lawyer and the Statesman, the Politician and the Magistrate, nay, I may add the Scholar and the Preacher, do all exert their Faculties, and spend their Labor and their Oyl, in hopes of Interest and Advantage. The Fatigue and Heat of the Day, would be really grievous and uneasy, were there no *Recompence of Reward*, even in this World. But yet that Person who justifies the Wicked for reward, and by that means takes away the righteousness

teousness of the righteous from him, deviates from the Rules of his great Master, whom he personates, who hath without any reserve declared, that *the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him, and the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him.* Will the Lord be pleas'd with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oyl; will Agag's fatter Cattle be to him a Peace Offering, or will the richest Oblations of the Sinner, be grateful in his Eye? No, *to do justice and judgment, is more acceptable to him than sacrifice.* Prov. 21. 3. And in these be hath more pleasure than in burnt-offerings for sin. Heb. 10. 6. God never passeth by the Failures of a Man, because Rich, nor doth he ever disregard a just Plea, because the Person is Poor, or a Widow: He suffers not the Plaintiffs Cause to want Weight, only because the Clients Pocket doth so, nor will he wink

wink at a false Verdict, in the behalf of the Defendant, for all the Riches of *Licinius*, or *Achæmenes*. For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and his eyes behold the thing that is upright, yea his eyes are always open to the righteous, and his Hands always ready to deal to every man according to the fruit of his doings. Jer. 17. 10. But then.

Secondly, As God is Just, so he is Merciful Likewise, yea, *his mercy is over all his works*. And although in this, Earthly Magistrates have not power to act according to the Measures of the Almighty, because he hath an absolute Dominion over the Creature, and may do what he will with his own; whereas Earthly Judges are oblig'd to pass Sentence, *Secundum allegata & probata*; yet Mercy being the Triumphant Attribute of Heaven, 'tis fit that they, who Personate God  
in

in his Justice, should in some measure tread in the steps of his Compassion too, tho' they cannot make so deep an impression. And in order to this, I shall only desire them to consider, that God doth not at all times inflict an equal Punishment upon two Persons, tho' guilty of the Breach of the same Law; but hath Recourse to a *Geometrical Proportion*, and either increases or abates his Inflictions as it suits to his Justice, intermixed with his Mercy, and directed by his Wisdom; as for instance. This Man was hurried on by a violent strength of Temptation; that wilfully run himself into the same Sin; this Sin was grown to a Habit in that Person; but 'tis the first time, and that by surprise, that ever this Man Sinned in that nature. That Man broke through all the strong Enclosure of God's assisting Grace; this Person was laid open

open to the Temptation. This was but *a babe in Christ*; that has been *fed with the strong meat of the Gospel*. This Persons Bashfulness led him to *sin in the dark*; that had a *Whores Fore-head*, and committed his Iniquity at Noon-day.

Here, tho' the Sin be the same in several Persons, yet these Circumstances will engage God to exert his Mercy more largely towards one, than towards the other: Thus does he *make way to his anger*, or as we read it in the vulgar Latin, *Librat viam ad iram suam*; he weighs the way to his Indignation, considers each Punctilio of the Fault, and catches at every Circumstance, which will open a Door of Mercy to the poor Offender; For altho' he does not *respect Persons*, yet *he will not destroy the Righteous with the Wicked*: *The Righteous*, who altho' Sinners, yet are comparatively *Righteous*, with  
the

*the Wicked, who are habitually, or wilfully such. And as God observes a measure in criminal, so does he likewise in judicial Proceedings. He will not encourage those who contend for smoke, for a Trifle, (tho' their Cause be just) so much as he will those whose all lies at stake. i. e. God would not, did he sit in our Courts of Judicature, give Light for so large Damage to a Boutifieu, or a common Barretter, as he would to an oppressed Widow, or a defrauded Orphan; for he always has favour to the peaceable; but the Turbulent and Contentious, his Soul is not with them. He especially shews Mercy to those who are not able to do themselves Justice, and will relieve the oppressed innocent out of his hands, who is too strong for him.*

These are briefly the Rules, this the Method, which God Almighty follows in the Exercise of his Justice



*stice* and his *Mercy*. To which I might add several weighty Reasons to move you to go and do likewise; but your known Integrity and great Wisdom will be a sufficient bar for my not doing so; especially since I may, and that most justly too, accost you in the same Words that the *Widow of Tekoah* did King David, *that as an Angel of God, so are you, my Lord, to discern between good and bad.* 2 Sam. 14. 17. And therefore 'twould be the greatest breach of Charity in the World, to think you would act against Knowledge, since you have never yet given one instance, either of your Injustice or Incompassion. However be pleas'd to give me leave to speak to you in the Words of one of the first Fathers and Martyrs of the Primitive Church; Ὁ Θεὸς ἔδοξε ὑμῖν πρὸς τὴν αὐτὴν, καὶ πρὸς τὰς ἑτέρας, καὶ πρὸς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, ὡς ἐν αὐτῇ κεῖναι τὸν Θεόν, καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ τὸ λαόν, *Justin Mart*;  
 God

God hath given you his own Honour, his own Place, his own Name; therefore do you judge the People, as he himself would judge them. Which is our first Observation, deducible from our first Particular, that if Judges Personate God, then they ought to act as they are convinc'd he would do, were he in their stead, as they are in his.

Secondly, If they Personate God, then we ought to Honor and pay a Civil regard to them. And here I shall not Treat of that Respect which is due to them, when off the Bench; for that every one will yield that understands the Measures of Civility; and those that do not, their Scarlet and their Trophies, their Coaches and Attendance, will attract them to do so. But I shall insist on that part of Regard which is due to them as *Vice Gods*, in order to the promoting Justice, and the

the advancement of Truth and Judgment. And herein every Man ought to consider, whether, if God were in Person upon the Bench, he would dare to give *that Almighty Being*, the trouble of deciding that Cause, in which he knew in point of Justice, a Verdict ought to be brought against him. Would a Defendant put in a Plea, which would appear evidently unjust in the Eye of that *Judge who seeth all things*? Or would a Witness attest that which his Conscience told him was an untruth, were he to swear in the visible Presence of that God, who hath enjoyn'd him to *bare false Witness against his Neighbour*? Would an Advocate call good evil, or evil good, would he by a fly Suggestion endeavour to enervate the Sinews of the Law, did he really see God in the Court; or would he say to his Client *thy Cause is Right*, when he

he knew nothing could make it so but Favour or a Fee, a Sophistical Pleader, or a Corrupt Judge? Would he dare to pick the Clients Pocket by subtle Delays and Falshood, or supplant and undermine the Truth, to obtain either Interest or Reputation to himself? These things would not be done if God were in Court in some visible Schechinah; and therefore, whoever is guilty of any of these fallacious Quirks, is as really peccant, as if God stood as Judge before him. For since we cannot see him Face to Face and live, 'tis a Mercy that he is pleas'd to consult our Interest and Security so far, as to Commissionate one to Act in his stead; and therefore, if we be guilty of any of those collusive Tricks, and disingenious Behaviour; we may suppose that he will reason with us in those Words of our Saviour in another

E e                      Case,

Case, In as much as you did it unto one of these, you did it unto me, Matth. 25. 40. In that you have gone about to stop the Current of Justice, and to turn judgment into worm-wood, Amos, 5. 7. by glossing over a bad Cause with the Paint of Insincerity and Falshood; in that you have given in a false Testimony against your Neighbour, or brought in a false Verdict against the Innocent and Oppressed; in that you have not, to the best of your knowledge, laid all things naked and open before my Deputy; but have through the Cloud of your Impiety, darken'd his Understanding and his Knowledge; you have, as much as in you lay, endeavour'd to cheat and delude the judge of all the earth; and have in effect in open Court boldly proclaim'd, how doth God know, can he judge through the dark cloud, Job 22. 13. tush, he seeth not, is there knowledge in the most high?

high? Which leads me to the Second thing considerable, viz. That as Judges Personate God, so he is a constant Eye-witness of all their Proceedings. Take heed what you do; for you judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment.

I am not ignorant that many Learned Commentators have interpreted these words, *is with you in the judgment*, in a twofold Acceptation.

First, That *he is with them*, to take notice of, and Eye all their Proceedings.

Secondly, to assist them, or as the Prophet speaks, *Isa. 28. 5, 6. To be a Spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment.*

But I shall for Brevity sake, confine my self at this time to speak to these Words only in the former Sense, that being most suitable to strike all that are concern'd in this publick Solemnity, into an awful Reverence of that great Judge of Hea-



ven and Earth, by reason of his immediate Presence in the midst of them.

‘ It was wholsom Advice, that  
 ‘ one gave to his lewd Friend, that  
 ‘ he should have the Picture of his  
 ‘ Grave, and serious Father in the  
 ‘ Room where he was wont to  
 ‘ Celebrate his Debauches; imagi-  
 ‘ ning that the severe Eye of the  
 ‘ good old Man, tho’ but an Effi-  
 ‘ gie, would give check to the wan-  
 ‘ ton Sallies of the intemperate  
 ‘ Youth. And to the same pur-  
 pose, *Seneca* advised *Lucilius*, to fix  
 the Idea of some grave Person, a  
*Cato*, or a *Laelius* before him, as a  
 very convincing Method to restrain  
 him from Vanity and Excess. To  
 which, I might add that of *Zeno*,  
 who being ask’d by his Friends, *how*  
*they might keep themselves in a regu-*  
*lar and due Order when he was gone,*  
 he made this reply, *Si me presentem*  
*semper putetis* ; by imagining me to be  
 al-

*always present as a beholder of your Actions.* But we who live under the Dispensation of the Gospel, have no need of such Foreign Exhortations as these, *we have a more sure word of Prophecy,* which does direct us to level our Thoughts, and fix our Apprehensions upon an Object, infinitely surmounting those in profane Story. We are taught that God is a constant Spectator of all our Actions; that we are in the Eye of our Friend, our Father, and our Judge; that *we can go no where from his presence,* Ps. 139. 7, 8. *but that all things are naked and open before that great God, with whom we have to do.* Heb. 4. 12, 13. And that *no man,* let his Attempts be never so earnest, *can hide himself,* or his Actions in secret places, *that this Lord shall not see them.* Jer. 23. 24.

And indeed these Thoughts are so riveted in the Mind of every

Christian, that nothing but a dark Cloud of Impiety can obscure our belief of it. An upright Judge is fully convinced that God sees the intention of his Heart ; and an uncorrupt Pleader is the very same. A faithful Witness knows, that the Almighty is in the Court ; and an impartial Jury does so too. In short, *the good man sets the Lord always before him*, Ps. 16. 8. and does really think that God stands by and sees all the Passages of his Life. And therefore I shall be so charitable as to believe that you all agree in the Assertion, and shall insist no longer upon the Proof of it, least by so doing, I should seem to bring the Integrity of some of you into question. Proceed I therefore to draw only one practical Observation from this second Proposition, and so I shall conclude.

Doth

Doth God eye all your Proceedings, then I pray you, consider to what purpose it is to varnish over a bad Cause with the Fucus of O-ratory, or the Paint of specious Pretences? What signifies the being brib'd in the dark, or suborn'd in a corner? To what purpose is the smothering your Falshood from the Eye of Men, *when it is seen and view'd by that great God, who knoweth all the hearts of the children of men,* 1 Kings 8. 39. *and the secrets thereof,* Ps. 44. 21.

It is an ingenious Comparison, (and very well suits this Case) which is put by a Modern Writer. 'Sup-  
'pose (says he) that you beheld the  
'Almighty, being sitting upon a  
'Cloud in some visible Form, with  
'a Thunder-bolt in his Hand, and  
'from thence looking down upon  
'you, curiously observing how you  
'demean your selves, and closely  
E c 4 'pur-

‘pursuing you with his awful Eye,  
‘through all your dark Retreats  
‘and Privacies; would not the  
‘Thought of any Action that is  
‘displeasing to him, be ready to  
‘strike you into Trembling and  
‘Horror; could you imagine your  
‘selves to be any where secure in  
‘your Wickedness, whilst you saw  
‘your selves uncovered to his All-  
‘seeing-eye, to which your Clo-  
‘sets lie as open as your Halls, and  
‘your Hearts as the High-ways?  
*To which he adds farther,* ‘if I were  
‘thoroughly assured that the King  
‘were listning behind the Curtain,  
‘and heard every Word that is spo-  
‘ken in the Room, I should doubt-  
‘less be as much afraid of talking  
‘Treason against him, tho’ I saw  
‘him not, as if he stood just be-  
‘fore me. And so if God be in  
‘your Court, in an invisible manner,  
‘and you are not able to see him  
‘through

through that thick Curtain of Matter, which is drawn between you and his spiritual Essence ; yet you may be well assured, that he is behind it, is listning to what you say, and prying into what you do ; keeps intelligence with your Thoughts, and is intimately acquainted with all your Pleadings, your Evidence and your Awards ; and therefore you ought to be every jot as cautious of all your Proceedings, as if you saw him standing by you, to Record every Thought, every Word, and every Action that there passes, and to enter into his Debt-books, every Item of your Guilt, against the great Day of Account.

Justice is every Mans Birth-right, and a Man can with no more Equity bereave me of it, than he can take away my Life, my Liberty, or Estate ; and therefore he that either doth so himself, or by false Wit-



Witness, or the like, occasions others to do so, is not only unfaithful to his Trust, but indeed a Felon and an Usurper; robbing me of that, to which I have not only a Claim by Nature, but by the Laws of the Realm too; and therefore must expect to have a very severe Sentence passed upon him, when he gives up his Accounts to that God, who was an Eye-witness of his Failures.

To conclude; I remember 'tis Recorded of *Henry IV.* that so great was his Wisdom, so considerable his depth of Knowledge, that 'twas said, *that he that would first corrupt his Council, must first begin with the King.* And blessed be God, we may as truly say that our Laws are so exactly contrived, our Courts so well filled with Men of Policy and profound Parts, that he that would  
per-

*pervert Judgment* must begin with the Bench; for it is scarce possible to imagine, that Injustice can be so closely managed, either upon the account of Witness, Jury, or Advocate, as that a Cause shall suffer without the Knowledge of the Judge, who like *Solomon*, will in all probability find out the Fallacy, under the most close Disguise.

And therefore give me leave, *my Lord* to add, that if you be not wanting to your self and to us, we may be assured, that *Justice will run down like a mighty Torrent, and that there will be no complaining in our Streets.* Let me take the freedom therefore once more to remind you, that you must one day appear at the Bar of that great God, whom you Personate, and *who is a judge among Gods.* Hear therefore the word of the Lord, &c. Thus saith the Lord, execute ye judgment and righteousness

ness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor; do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, neither shed innocent blood in this place, Jer. 22. 1. &c. Ezek. 42. 27. But defend the poor and fatherless, do justice to the afflicted and needy, and rid them out of the hand of the wicked; and in all your Proceedings, both Judicial and Criminal, take heed what you do, for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment: wherefore let the fear of the Lord be upon you, take heed and do it, for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.

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P S A L M

## PSALM XXVII. XIII. XIV.

*I had fainted, unless I had believed, to  
see the goodness of the Lord in the  
Land of the living.*

*Wait on the Lord, be of good courage,  
and he shall strengthen thy heart :  
wait, I say, on the Lord.*

**H**E that soberly sits down, and  
considers the State and Con-  
dition of Man; how that *he is born  
unto trouble, as the sparks fly upwards,*  
shall find his Life perpetually sur-  
rounded with so many sorrowful  
Changes and Vicissitudes, that 'twill  
be matter of the greatest Wonder,  
how the Spirit of Man could bear the  
*Infirmities of Nature*, and carry him  
through the Disappointments of this  
*Valley of Tears*. And indeed, had  
not

not the frame of our Constitution, and the contexture of our Minds been curiously contrived by the Hand of an All-wise Being; did not the Faculties of our upper Region greatly support our tottering building of Clay, 'tis impossible but *the day of our Birth*, would appear to be our greatest Misfortune, and the silent Grave be earnestly sought for, and desired by each thinking Son of *Adam*.

But the Wisdom of Providence hath by such an admirable Method fram'd the whole Man, that as one part is subservient to the other, so the other is no less assistant to that, and if *one Member suffer*, or *all are aggrieved*, the reasonable part ushers in an effectual Relief: So that although we cannot live exempt from great Tryals and Sufferings, whilst we are cloathed with this Robe of Flesh, yet we are certain (if we  
be

be not wanting to our selves) never to be without a comfortable Support under those Pressures; but even amidst the fluctuating Billows of the Waters of Marah, we have the Anchor of hope to keep us stedfast, and the sure Refuge of God to be our stay and our Salvation: And although our sorrowful thoughts should multiply on us so fast, that they almost depress us into a fainting Despair; yet when we are fully convinc'd, that notwithstanding the present Eclipse of our Comforts, we shall yet live to see the goodness and deliverance of the Lord; we may be troubled on every side, but we shall not be distressed; perplexed, yet not in despair; persecuted, yet not forsaken; cast down, yet not destroyed: But if we wait on the Lord, and be of good courage, he shall strengthen our heart, and be a very present help in time of trouble: And this we have asserted by that  
Great,



Great, that Kingly Prophet *David*, in the Words of my Text, *I had fainted, unless I had believed, to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.*

*Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.*

Which Psalm was composed by him, when he was, or had lately been in some great Distress: And doth contain,

*First*, An Implication of those great Troubles and Sorrows which *David* was exercised with; so great that he had much a-do to contain himself from fainting, from desponding under them.

*Secondly*, *David's* Support under those Pressures, or what it was that sustained him in all his Tryals, *I had fainted, unless I had believed, to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living*, i. e. It had not been possi-

possible for me to support my self under so many Troubles, and such great Distress, but that I had a firm trust and confidence, that God would in Mercy restore me into the enjoyment of an happy and prosperous Condition, even in this Life. For although **אֶרֶץ חַיִּים** the Original for the Land of Lives, or of the Living, may seem very fitly to denote (where the context requires it) the future Age, viz. either Heaven, or the coming of the *Messiah*; yet it being the matter of this whole Psalm, to express his confidence; That God would not leave him in his present distress, but deliver him in this needful time of Trouble; we may suppose, that it was a temporal Blessing which he here meant; *I had fainted, unless I had believed, &c.* 'Twas his Confidence and Assistance, his Hope and Assurance, that God would deliver him out of

all his Troubles whilst here in the Flesh ; upon which he

*Thirdly,* Builds a Rock of Encouragement, not only for himself, but for the whole Race of Mankind after him, to support and comfort them in their greatest Afflictions. *Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart: wait, I say, on the Lord, i. e.* O my Soul, do thou patiently wait God's Leisure; be not discouraged with thy present Evils, but arm thyself with Constancy and Fortitude, and never doubt of God's seasonable Relief: Or we may suppose it as spoken to a second Person, and then it will import thus much; let me admonish thee whoever thou art, that shalt hereafter fall into any such Straights or Troubles, to learn, by my Example, not to be impatient, or despond presently, much less despair of Relief, if the Lord do

do not send it just when thou expectest it ; but wait upon him still with the stedfast hope, and fortifie thy self with a strong Faith in him. Let not thy Heart fail thee in the greatest Danger, but as I said, *wait upon the Lord*, and confidently expect, that in his good time he will relieve thee.

From which Words, thus briefly explained, I shall treat of these three Propositions.

*First*, That there is scarce any Person, but what at one time or other is exercised with great Troubles.

*Secondly*, That if it was not for the comfortable relief, and hope of being delivered out of those Troubles, he would certainly sink under the apprehension and sense of them.

*Thirdly*, That the experience which Men have had of God's former Delive-

rances, doth strictly oblige us to wait with patience Gods own time.

*First*, There is scarce any Person, but what at one time or other, is exercised with great Troubles.

And that this is a Truth beyond all contradiction, will, I believe, be owned by the Testimony of all Mankind. For, have we recourse from the Palace to the Cottage, from the Prince to the Peasant, each Person will freely assert, that *man that is born of a woman, is full of trouble*, Job 14. 1. Trouble is as it were his Element, and is so intwisted in his Nature, that it seems to be part of his Essence, and bespeaks him a Man sooner than his Risibility doth. We no sooner quit the Womb of our Mother, than that we tell our Complaints in Tears; and we give notice we are aggrieved, before we have reason to know by what means we are so; and when we arrive to  
the

the Nuts and Rattles of our Childhood, how many little disappointments do we meat with, which gall our innocent Souls? and though we be free from Care, yet sorrowful Thoughts are our frequent Associates; and after we have out-strip'd the Ferula and the Rod, and think our selves mounted into the Regions of Bliss, we then, alas! advance into a new Scene of Troubles, and a greater; our Disappointments are more Manly, and consequently more heavy; and our business being of greater moment, a frustration in it must be so too. So that let us view the several Stages and Periods of Man's Life, and we may in every gradation trace the foot-steps of his Misery; and he, who can give us an instance of a total exemption from any sorrowful Appendages in his whole Life, doth bespeak himself



either more than Man, or less considerate than a Beast.

*The Son of God himself was a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief; and the Saints and best Christians, and followers of the Lamb, had Tribulation and Anguish, as their Portion and Lot. The Sons of Sion do frequently weep by the Waters of Babylon: And the Daughters of Jerusalem are oft-times as solitary as the Birds of the Desert. 'Tis true, indeed, all things do not here come alike to all; but some Mens Sorrows are enlarg'd, and their whole Life apparently clad in a Sable Robe, whilst others seem to tread the Stage in a Princely Dress, and have all their Paths strewed with Rose-buds of Delight and Jollity; and yet even these, for any thing we know, may have an inward Garb of Tears; and their retired Thoughts, which we see not, may be as Pensive, and*  
as

as Melancholly, as the Dreams of an Anchoret. No Man (according to our Proverbial Expression) *knows were the Shooe pinches, but he that wears it*: And though all appear Serene and Quiet without, yet *in the midst of laughter, the heart may be sorrowful*; and the Mind sit drooping, whilst the Countenance is gay: And even he, who is the Object of Envy to those who look upon the Surface of his Estate, appears at the same time worthy of Compassion to those who know his private Recesses. ‘Solon  
 ‘seeing a Friend much oppress’d with  
 ‘Grief, carried him up to a Town  
 ‘that overlook’d the City of *Athens*,  
 ‘and shewing him all the nume-  
 ‘rous Buildings of that Place, said  
 ‘unto him, consider how many Sor-  
 ‘rows have, do, and shall in future  
 ‘Ages inhabit under all those Roofs;  
 ‘and do not vex thy self with those  
 ‘Inconveniencies, which are common

to Mortality, as if they were only yours. And could we at once take a view of all the Kingdoms of the Earth, and thoroughly discern the several griping Agonies incident to each individual Man; could we at one view see all the Sufferings of all Ranks and Degrees of Men, from the Cedar of Libanus, to the humble Shrub upon the Wall, we should be hard beset to tell, who was the Man among that untold Multitude the least acquainted with Grief: Or, to point out of that numerous Host whose Tears, ere-while, had not been his Meat, Day or Night. Not the First-born of the Creation, nor the Friend of the Almighty; not the Israel of God, nor the chosen of Christ; but what have sojourned in a suffering State, whilst present in the Body. 'Tis the Fundamental Law of God, that we must have Tribulation; and by an irreversible Decree, we must through

*through many Trials enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*

*Secondly,* If it was not for the hopes of being deliver'd out of those Troubles, Man would certainly sink under the Apprehension and Sense of them. David professeth this of himself; *I had fainted, unless I had believed, to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.*

The Word *אלי* except, or *unless*, is altogether omitted, both by the *Seventy*, the *Latin*, and the *Syriac* Translation. The two former render it, *I believe to see*; i. e. Though my Troubles were very great indeed; yet I was fully satisfied, that God would give me an hopeful Issue out of them. And this I the rather remark, because this Translation seems very consonant to the Humour and Genius of Mankind: For, it is almost as natural to hope, as to pray for Relief in adverse Fortune.

tune. And although things upon a thorough view may seem to be beyond All Redress; yet, upon first sight, Self-love opens a Door of Hope, and encourages us to build, though it be but upon a sandy Foundation.

When the *Brethren of Joseph* had cast him into that pit; from whence, as they thought, he would never be redeemed. 'Tis the Opinion of a Modern Author, that the poor Prisoner, when he was in that Belly of Hell, sent up his Petition; *O thou who art the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, though a deliverance hence, to my shallow apprehension, seems impossible; yet, Lord, thou canst deliver me, if it seems good in thy sight.* And, as the Issue tells us, that God did so; so may we thence gather likewise thus much; that Man in the most deplorable Condition, is mighty ready to believe and hope a Redress. 'Tis  
diffi-

difficult in our Sorrows to dismantle the Fort of Expectation; and 'tis as much so, in our pressing Necessities, to baffle the Fortress of Affiance. And, indeed, as it is mighty becoming us as Christians, so it is no less advantageous to us as Men, to entertain comfortable Hopes of Deliverance from our Distress: For otherwise our Thoughts must necessarily disband, and we must sink into inevitable Despair. For that Man who labours under the pressing Torture of the Gout, or the Stone, did he believe his Pain equally, without remedy, and without intermission, with what deplorable Lamentations would he languish out his Day? And *how sweet would the clouds of the valley be to him?* Job 21. 33. She whose pregnant Womb grows weary of her Burthen, did not every Minute make fair Promises of a *man-child being born into the world,*



*world*, would her self sadly lament, because *she died not between the knees*, and *curse the paps that gave her suck*; did she fully believe that her sorrowful Pangs would accompany her to the *Chambers of the dead*, and that in this World there should be no respite to her Labour and her Pain. What Horror and Desperation would possess her Soul, and how eagerly would she supplicate the quiet Grave to Midwife her teeming Womb! When the Mind is oppress'd with the dire Apprehensions of a never-ceasing Misery; *Stoicism* it self will not afford us Patience, nor all the Theorems of Philosophy add one grain of Acquiescence to us. No Art, no Skill, can buoy up the Mind of him whose Condition is Miserable, and who sadly knows that it will always be so. Even a God Incarnate will passionately bemoan his distressed Estate, when he finds him

himself forsaken; and therefore weak miserable Man, when he cannot see through the dark Cloud, will do much more so. I had fainted, unless I had believed, to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart.

Thirdly, The Experience which Men have had of God's Former Deliverances, doth strictly oblige us to wait with patience God's own time. The Apostle St. Paul, encouraging the *Corinthians* to bear with patience the Tryal incident to human Nature, reminds them of the Deliverance that God did formerly vouchsafe to him and his fellow Labourers, *Gaius and Aristarchus*, Acts 19. 29. and thence builds a Fortress of future Trust and Dependance on him; his Life had been in very great Jeopardy at *Ephesus*, where he had like to have been brought out to the Theatre

tre to have been devoured by wild Beasts; and indeed had no human means to avert, and consequently to escape it. And therefore he tells them, that he had this advantage by it, that the more he believed, he should be put to death; the more he was engaged by his deliverance, never to depend on any worldly trust, but only on God, who can rescue from the greatest extremity, even from the grave, or Death it self; as you may see, 2 Corinth. 1. 8, 9, 10 Verses, For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble, which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life. But we had the sentence of death in our selves, that we should not trust in our selves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust, that he will yet deliver us: And indeed a stronger

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Argument cannot be brought for future Affiance than past Deliverance; for what ground or reason can I have to distrust the Kindness of that Person who hath always been my Friend and Benefactor? On whom can I better rely for assistance in the day of my Distress, than on him who stood by me in all mine Affliction: And when I was at the very brink of destruction, delivered me out of all my Troubles? Would it not be highly ingrateful, and reflect either upon his Goodness or Sufficiency, to distrust that Providence which hath always had a watchful eye over me; and who, according to his gracious Promises, would never yet leave me nor forsake me? I am sure, with good ground, depend upon him for relief, who hath been more ready to give, than I to ask; and whose divine Inclinations have been always  
to-

towards me to do me good; and I may surely trust that God of Mercies, who hath already been so plentiful in his Distribution towards me. *If the former and the latter rain have hitherto descended upon the earth in due season, and seed-time, and harvest have never yet fail'd, why should I not still expect the Fruit of the Earth at it's appointed time? Or, for what reason should I fear either Famine or Scarcity of Bread in the Land? If I have by the Omnipotent Power of God been formerly delivered from the Paw of the Lyon, or the Paw of the Bear, what reason have I to tremble at the Beasts of the Forest when they move; or, to be amazed at the Bulls of Basan, when they compass me about on every side? I have read a Story of a young Man, who being very merry in a Storm, when the other Passengers were almost distracted with Fear,*  
and

and being ask'd the reason of his Non-dejectedness, he gave this Answer; that the Pilot of the Ship was his Father, and he knew his Father would take all possible Care of him. Now the Great and Wise God, who is the Pilot of this great Vessel, the World, hath vouchsaf'd to *adopt us his Sons*, and shall we then distrust the Care of our Heavenly Father? Especially, since we have in so many Instances of Mercy and Deliverance experienc'd his Good-will towards us? Since he hath so often *made our Storm a Calm*, *so that the Waves thereof were still*, *and hath brought us in safety to the Haven where we would be*. But if we are either so stupid or forgetful, as that we cannot call to Mind his loving Kindness in time past, but have quite obliterated the remembrance of any former Deliverances to us; yet we may in legible Chara-



cters, trace the Foot-steps of the Almighty, and see the Finger of God in manifold Instances of his Mercy to our Fore-fathers of old.

All *Scripture*, the Apostle tells us, *was written for our example*; and there is not one Instance of Sorrow in human Life, but we have fair Precedents of it, and of Deliverance from it in *Holy Writ*. As for Instance: Art thou Sick or Diseased? So was the Woman in the Gospel twelve Years, and her Issue stayed; and the Man thirty eight Years, and yet at last healed. Art thou blind? So was *Bartimæus*, and the Man born so; yet both restor'd to Sight by our blessed Saviour. Art thou poor? So was Holy *Job* to a Proverb, who had all his vast Substance taken from him by the *Chaldeans*, yet re-instated again in a more flourishing Condition than before. Art thou in debt? So was the

the Prophet's Wife, who, just when her two Sons were going to be made Bond-men by her Creditor, had her Obligations discharged. Art thou Imprisoned? So were *Jeremiah*, *Paul*, and *Silas*; yet all released by the Omnipotent Arm of Heaven. Art thou encompassed about with Enemies on every side? So were King *Asa*, *David*, *Hezekiah*, and others; yet all made Victorious by the Omnipotent Hand of God. Art thou in Famine? So were *Abraham*, *Abimelech*, and the *Shunamite*; yet all relieved by the good Hand of Providence. Hast thou lost Relations or Children, those dear Parts of thine own Flesh? So did Holy *Job*, who was at once deprived of all his Sons and Daughters, and that too by a sudden and violent Death; and yet was at last reblest with an equal number of Children. Art thou without a set-

ted Place to live in? So was all *Israel* for many Years together; yet at last possessed of a Land flowing with Milk and Honey. Nay, art thou without a Bed to lie on? So was *Joseph*, whose Feet lay in the Stocks till the Iron entred into his Soul; yet after that *the Word of the Lord had tried him, he became the second in the Kingdom of Ægypt*. In a Word, there is no melancholly Occurrence in the Life of Man, but Holy Scripture affords us fair Precedents of it, thereby to square and order our goings. And therefore seeing we are thus compassed about with so great a Cloud of Witnesses, let us run with Patience the Race that is set before us, and let the Experience which either we our selves, or other Men have had of God's former Deliverance, strictly oblige us to wait his good Leisure, being well assur'd, that  
we

we shall reap in due time, if we faint not.

And thus having discuss'd the Three Propositions which I propos'd to speak to, viz.

*First*, That there is scarce any Person but what at some time or other is exercised with great Troubles.

*Secondly*, That if it was not for the hopes of being delivered out of them, he would certainly sink under the Apprehension and Sense of them.

*Thirdly*, That the experience which Men have had of God's former Deliverances, do strictly oblige us to wait with Patience God's own time.

I shall now draw some few Corollaries from what has been said, and so conclude.

*First*, Is there no Person but what at some time or other is exercised with great Troubles? Why then

are we so extreamly startled when any sudden Storms arise? Why do we admire that the Ocean of Affliction swells upon us, and the Billows of Sorrow are ready to overwhelm us? Are we not rank'd in the common Class of Rational Creatures? And if so, how can we plead a total Exemption from the common Stock of Calamities, or look upon them when they do come, as though some strange thing had happened to us? Was not Holy *David* as signal for his Afflictions, as for his Piety? And was not *Abraham*, though the Friend of God, acquainted with severe Tryals? Was not *Job*, God's upright one, as great a Spectacle of Misery as he was of Patience? And did not the Anointed of the Lord swim through a Sea of Blood to his Throne? If then the best, the most upright, the wisest of Mankind, were debarr'd their good things  
in

in this Life; if all our *Fore-fathers* had pass'd through this *Cloud*, and through this *Sea*, how can we expect to perfect our Pilgrimage here with constant Joy, and uninterrupted Pleasure? No, unless we can divest our selves of all the Infirmities of our Flesh, and lay aside all the Frailties incident to human Nature; unless we can put off all the Suffering Capacities framed and entwisted with our Beings, and erase all the Characters which entitle us Men, we must expect to be troubled on every side, Fightings without, and Fears within; 2 Cor. 7. 5. *Let no man then be moved by these Afflictions, for your selves know, that you were appointed thereunto, 1 Thess. 3. 3. For Affliction cometh not forth out of the dust, neither doth trouble come out of the ground, but God he raiseth up one, and bringeth down another, he maketh poor, and maketh rich, he wounds and he heals,*



neither is there any that can deliver out of his hands, Deut. 32. 39. Let us not then murmur and repine at the severe Dispensations of God, since they are the lot of every Son of Adam; but let us humble our selves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt us in due time, 1 Pet. 5. 6. and when he thinks fit to lay trouble upon our Loins, let us not foolishly expostulate with our Maker, and ask, why his Chariot-wheels stay so long, and why he vouchsafeth us not a speedy relief? Why the rod of his anger lies so long upon us, and why we are thus long vexed with all his storms? But let us consider that there is no temptation or trouble that hath befallen us, but what is common to Man; and that many of our Fellow-creatures, have dyed in the bitterness of their soul, and have never eaten with pleasure: But above all, let us consider, that let the fiery tryal of  
God's

God's Displeasure be never so severe upon us in this World, yet God hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our Iniquities; he hath only chastened us with the rod of man, whereas he might have lashed us with the Scorpions of his Indignation.

Secondly, Is there no way possible to sustain our drooping Souls, and to stay them from the gulph of Despair, but hopes of Deliverance out of that Distress which is upon us? Then let us not rob our selves of that inestimable Jewel, but with comfortable Expectations of Relief, look up unto the Rock of our Deliverance, the God of our Salvation: Let us often, in our Prayers and Thanksgivings, remind him that he hath sworn in his holiness, that he will never leave us nor forsake us, but hath promised that he will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in time  
of

*of trouble. Can a Father see his dear Child in Distress, without Sorrow and Regret? Will not his Bowels yearn towards his Relief, when he sees him languishing upon the Bed of Affliction? Can a woman forget her sucking child, and have no compassion upon the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee, but will surely have mercy upon thee, saith the Lord. God hath made a thousand Promises to hear our cry, and to help us when we call upon him. And therefore if at any time, notwithstanding our humble Petitions, the Rod of his Anger be not removed, but his hand be stretched out still, 'tis his Love and tender Compassion towards us that occasions it to be so; 'tis our sin that separates between us and our God, and our iniquities withhold the former and the latter rain of his deliverance from us. 'Tis to make us more solicitous in our search after him,*

him, that occasions him to *hide his face from us*; and the reason why he Afflicts us is, because he would have us seek him early. Cast thy burthen therefore upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee, he shall never suffer thee to be removed, Psalm 55. 22. when thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitned; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble, Prov. 4. 12. when thou passest through the Waters, God will be with thee; and through the Rivers, they shall not overflow thee, Jer. 32. 40. Let us be strong therefore in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and let no adverse Fortune so far benight our Minds, as to make them suffer an Eclipse, and sink under a forlorn Despondency. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou so disquieted within me? Trust in God who sees all those Conflicts under which thou labourest, who knows thy Necessities afar off, and puts all*  
thy

thy tears into his bottle. He eyes every careful Thought and pensive Look, afflictive Sigh, and Melancholly Groan which thou utterest? 'Tis he which is the Author of all thy Trouble, and designs it for the Physick of thy Soul: And like a Wise and Careful Physitian, stands by and takes notice how it Operates upon thee. His eyes neither slumber nor sleep, but are perpetually watchful over thee for good; and therefore in all thy Tryals and Afflictions thou may'st successfully fly to him for succour, and with full assurance cry out with the Holy Psalmist, yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou, O God, art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me, Psalm 23. 4. Which that we may effectually do, let us all of us,

Thirdly, Represent to our selves, in as lively Characters as we can,  
all



all the Mercies and Deliverances which God hath hitherto vouchsafed to us, let us all call to mind the loving Kindnesses which we have received of old, and remember the later gracious Vouchsafements of the Almighty. There's not one, I dare say, amongst this numerous Assembly, but can give several Instances of God's Power and his Arm over him; and could enumerate several Cases wherein *the God of Jacob was his help*, and the *holy one of Israel his Redeemer*. Hast thou ever laid upon the Bed of Languishing, or laboured under any grievous Distemper? Call to mind thy sorrowful pensive Spirit at that time, and add to it, who it was that had *Mercy on thee*, that *brought thee out of darkness*, and the *shadow of death*, and made all thy bed *in thy sickness*. Hath the scantiness of thy Condition hurried thee into great Straights and Difficulties, and brought



brought thee *almost to thy wits end* ; Consider who it was that spread thy Table in that Wilderness of Thoughts, and made thy Cup to overflow ; who it was that added a Friend of Consolation to thee, and thereby *spake Peace to thy troubled Mind*. Hast thou ever sustained any considerable Damage in thy Stock, or thy Trade ? Bethink thy self who it was that repaired those Breaches ; or, that gave a serene and contented Mind under those Losses. Hast thou ever been wounded in thy more tender Parts, through the loss of an obliging Husband, or an endearing Friend, or a promising Child ? Considering whether the *God of Truth* did not approve himself a *Father to thee* when *Fatherless*, or an *Husband* when a *Widow* : And has either given thee a Name better than of *Sons or Daughters*, (or even beyond thy Hopes) made thy remaining tender

der Branches to grow up tall and glorious, like the *Cedars of Libanus*.

And let the Consideration of these and the like past Deliverances, either to thy Self, Friends, or Acquaintance, keep the from Fainting, and encourage the to put thy Trust in the Lord for future Mercies. Let the Consideration of this having formerly *done great things for us*, prompt us up to believe that he will do so still; and that *he will go on to speak Peace to our Souls*. In a Word, let us *hope, even beyond hope*, and challenge and engage God to be our Redeemer, by an absolute and entire Dependence upon him in our greatest Wants, and most melancholy Abodings. And *although the Fig-tree should not blossom, neither should Fruit be in the Vine; although the Labour of the Olive should fail, and the Fields should yield no Meat; although the Flock should*  
be

be cut off from the Fold, and there  
should be no Herd in the Stalls; yet  
let us rejoyce in the Lord, let us joy in  
the God of our Salvation.

To whom be all Honour, and Glory,  
now and for ever. Amen.

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F I N I S,

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